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D. J. Wiseman

Answer





MIZPEH (*Neby Samwil*).

The assembling-place of all Israel under Samuel.



# SAMUEL AND HIS AGE:

A Study

IN

THE CONSTITUTIONAL HISTORY OF ISRAEL.

BY

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## P R E F A C E.

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**T**HERE are certain conspicuous personalities in the history of the Kingdom of God in the Old Testament, men whose lives form epochs in the opening up of His ways to His people. Moses is immeasurably the grandest of these. Probably the next to him is Samuel; and just as we understand Samuel, his character, his position, his offices, and his work, or fail to understand him, we shall succeed in understanding, or shall fail to understand, very much of Jehovah's dealings with Israel. There is one very marked resemblance between Moses and Samuel—both exercised the three great functions in the Hebrew Commonwealth, those of prophet, priest, and supreme ruler, combining in their own persons three offices which in ordinary circumstances were jealously kept separate.

It is matter of deep and unfeigned regret to me that the scholars who form what is commonly known as the Critical School, appear to have failed here; and therefore, while my object is to bring out the truth about Samuel as a student of his history finds it presented in Holy Scripture, it is impossible wholly to avoid noticing and characterising what I

must regard as their misapprehensions and errors. Two eminent writers occupy a prominent place in the eyes of English-speaking theological students of the present day, as representatives of this critical teaching among men whom I rejoice to acknowledge as believing critics, namely, the late Professor Robertson Smith and Professor Driver.

Of Dr. Driver I wrote in the preface to my "Isaiah One and His Book One" (p. 7): "In dealing with the views of these believing critics, I have chiefly quoted or referred to Canon Driver, for no critical writer is more easily accessible to English readers, or is more likely to give them a clear and good statement of the case from his side of it. And I know of none among his fellow-workers who has shown more ability or learning; and I am less in danger of going too far, or of saying anything which I ought not, when I am discussing the statements of an old and valued friend, to differ from whom is always a matter of deep regret to me."

Dr. Robertson Smith was an intimate friend from the time that he became Professor. Both in public and in private we discussed the points in controversy, on which we often disagreed very widely, yet without any injury to our cordial relations.

A third name is likely to become familiar to English readers, that of Professor Henry Preserved Smith, the author of the Commentary on the Books of Samuel in "The International Critical Commentary," now in course of publication. For many reasons I should

have wished to obtain assistance from a man of learning, who has obviously devoted much labour to his subject. I am extremely sorry that I have not been able to do this. My inability has been partly owing to my endeavour to make my volume useful even to those who do not read Hebrew. A very large part of his work is occupied with textual criticism of a kind which I fear they might be compelled to pass over; and I confess that I do not agree with his estimate of the comparatively corrupt state of the Hebrew text, and of the necessity for continual reference to the ancient translations commonly known as the *Versions*, particularly the Greek. But a much more cogent reason for my inability to derive much benefit from the study of his commentary is the wide and deep cleft which seems to separate us in respect of our views of Holy Scripture and of those men by whom it has been written. There are differences of opinion about the age in which a book was composed, about the author, and about possible editors, differences which may not cut at all so deep as I feel that my differences with Dr. H. P. Smith cut. A few extracts from the volume will make my position and meaning plain; and, unfortunately, the difficulty has been, not to find passages for quotation, but to confine myself within due limits. As I run over what he has written on the first half of 1 Samuel, with which I have been chiefly occupied, I meet with statements such as the following:—

Page 9, on chap. 1. 11: "Our author does not seem

to be troubled by the question whether Hannah had a right to make a vow of this kind without the consent of her husband. The point which most interests us is that the author cannot have thought of Samuel (or Elkanah) as a Levite, for in that case the vow would have been unmeaning. But that he also loses sight of the ancient regulation that every male that opens the womb is already the property of Yahweh, seems evident. The statement in the text, *a razor shall not come upon his head*, reads like a later addition."

Page 20, on chap. 2. 22: "The second half of the verse brings as an additional accusation against the priests that they *used to lie with the women who ministered at the gate of the Tent of Meeting*. The sentence is suspicious, first, because it is lacking in  $\text{C}^B$ . In the second place, the original narrator has stated his accusation above, and this should have been made a part of that accusation. Finally, the whole narrative, except in this verse, is ignorant of *women who ministered* and of the *Tent of Meeting*, as established at Shiloh. The language is borrowed from the priestly document of the Pentateuch (Exod. 38. 8). For these reasons the half verse is to be regarded as a late interpolation."

Page 21, on chap. 2. 27-36: "The piece reminds us of similar sections elsewhere (Judg. 6. 7 ff.; 1 Kings 13. 1 ff.), where a prophet is sent with a rebuke, and of others (Judg. 2. 1-5; 10. 11-16), where Yahweh himself (or his angel) delivers the rebuke.



All such sections are of comparatively late date, and the present one is no exception."

Page 34, on chap. 4: "If this were part of the document which makes Samuel so prominent, his name would certainly have been mentioned here, either to explain his escape or to account for his absence."

Page 47, on chap. 6. 15: "The only reason for the verse is found in the mention of the *Levites*. A late editor or scribe could not reconcile the free handling of the ark by the men of Beth Shemesh with the legal prescription, and therefore inserted the *Levites*. These are utterly foreign to our whole narrative up to this point. Yet they alone (on the later theory) were empowered to touch the sacred things, not only the ark but the chest and its contents. Hence the insertion." And on v. 17: "The verse (with 18a) is another late insertion, a recapitulation after the method of the Priest code and the Chronicler. It is free with its gold, according to the precedent set by these writers, for it is doubtful whether the original author contemplated golden mice for all the cities, towns, and hamlets of the Philistines."

Page 48, on chap. 6. 19: "The verse affirms that Yahweh smote some of the people. The received text seems to give as a reason that *they looked upon the ark*. There is, however, no other indication that this author thought it sinful to look upon the ark. Had he thought so, he would have shewn what precautions were taken by the Israelites before the battle to prevent this profanation, and would for this

cause have aggravated the plague sent upon the Philistines."

Pages 50, 51, on chap. 7. 2-17: "The contradiction between the statements here made and what we know of the actual history is complete. The conquests of Saul and David are here attributed to Samuel, who occupies the position of the theocratic ruler—comparable only to Moses. The author's theory of history is like that of the Deuteronomistic editor of the Book of Judges—if possible, more mechanical than his. The people are enslaved because they have worshipped strange gods. No sooner do they return to Yahweh than he returns to them and delivers them. The deliverance is accomplished by a miraculous intervention. No human warrior (like the Judges) is needed. For this reason we may assume that the section is even later than the pragmatic framework of the Book of Judges."

Page 54, on chap. 7. 13: "The Philistines *were subdued and came no more into the border of Israel*. The extravagance of the statement is evident"—that is, when the statement is distorted by omitting the following words, which in the Scripture complete the sentence:—"And the hand of Jehovah was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel." But this sentence somehow has taken hold of Dr. H. P. Smith. He returns to it (p. 58, on chap. 8. 20), where the people desire a king to fight their battles. "This author seems to forget that Samuel had secured them peace," as if they had not plenty of enemies besides the

Philistines. And again, with a little more plausibility, though not really more correct, at p. 62, on chap. 9. 16: "*And he shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines.* The sentence is a direct contradiction of 7. 11 ff."

Page 55, on chap. 8 as a whole: "The section is homogeneous down to 22*b*, and directly continues the preceding account. It is also of late date. In fact, it is hardly conceivable that the conception of the monarchy as essentially evil and in itself a revolt from the theocracy, could have arisen before the fall of Jerusalem. For, however bad the individual kings of the house of David might be, there was always a hope (well illustrated by Isaiah) that the ideal government would come to view in the reign of a righteous king." Then, on chap. 8. 22*b*, he observes at p. 58: "The half verse is a later insertion. The original account joined chap. 10. 17 directly to 8. 22*a*. The compiler was obliged to dismiss the people to their homes in order to insert the following incident taken from another source."

Pages 61, 62, on chap. 9. 9, after noticing that Samuel had been called "a man of God" at *v.* 6: "The verse now before us calls him a Seer (נִבִּי), a word used twice by Isaiah (28. 7; 30. 10); elsewhere only in this passage and in Chronicles (1 Chron. 9. 22; 26. 28; 29. 29, dependent on the account before us, and 2 Chron. 16. 7, 10, where it is applied to Hanani). The rarity of the word led a scribe to insert this verse as an explanation, which, however, has fallen



into the wrong place; it belongs after *v.* 11. The conception of the prophet (שׂוֹמֵר) which it betrays is that of a clairvoyant, to whom one may come for the discovery of lost articles."

Page 80, on chap. 11. 12-15: "The paragraph has been worked over to fit the present composite narrative. Samuel probably had no place in the original document—the related section (9. 1-10. 16) makes him only the seer of a single town. There is no reason why he should accompany Saul to the war or why he should officiate at his public recognition; but in *vv.* 12-14 we find Samuel acting as leader and recognised authority. There is reason to suppose, therefore, that these verses in their present shape are the redactional bonds between the two streams of narrative. Verse 15, on the other hand, may be a fragment of the original narrative, but something must have stood between it and *v.* 11."

Pages 97, 98, on chap. 13. 8-15*a*: "What was Saul's sin in this matter is nowhere expressly set down, and it is difficult to discover anything in the text at which Samuel could justly take offence. The original command was to wait seven days, and this Saul did. In the circumstances he might well plead that he had been too scrupulous. It would not be impertinent to ask why Samuel had waited so long before appearing. No reason is given for his delay, and in the mind of the narrator there seems to have been no reason except that Samuel wished to put Saul to the test. It cannot be said that Saul usurped priestly

prerogatives in offering with his own hand. The narrator would certainly have let us know this had it been his conception. Whatever may have been the priestly rights at this time, we may well suppose that the author thought of Saul as no more intruding upon them than did David and Solomon when they sacrificed. The language of Samuel's rebuke speaks of disobedience to a command of Yahweh, which, however, can only be the command of 10. 8, which Saul literally obeyed. The only conclusion to which we can come is that the author glorifies the sovereign will of Yahweh, who rejects and chooses according to his own good pleasure. Samuel is the embodiment of this sovereign will." With this may be compared what he says in his Introduction (p. xxxv): "It is in the representation of the character of Yahweh that we see the primitiveness of Israel's religion at this time. Yahweh is a God inscrutable in his actions—a God of moods we might almost call him. He instigates Saul against David for no reason of which the latter is conscious. Yet by inhaling the fragrance of a sacrifice, it is probable that he may be placated, and thus his good humour be restored. At a later time he instigates David to commit a sin, apparently in order that he may punish him, just as he hardened the hearts of Eli's sons in order that he might destroy them."

Page 130, on chap. 15 as a whole: "The majority of critics draw a sharp line between this and the following chapter (16. 1-13). The reason is not apparent. On the contrary, the logical sequence of this chapter is

found in that paragraph. Saul is rejected in order that David may be anointed. It may be said that Samuel's fear of Saul in the second section is inconsistent with the autocratic position which he here occupies. But it should be remembered that the motive of the author in making Samuel dissimulate is to account for the secrecy of the transaction. He knew that no hint of an anointing of David appears in any other document. To account for this fact, he must make Samuel keep his errand secret. The obvious device was to make his concealment motived by fear of Saul."

My object in presenting such extracts as these is to let my readers judge for themselves in regard to the spirit and methods of much of the so-called critical writing of the present day. I should not like to see such criticism of any ordinary historian, ancient or modern: I have much more acute feelings in regard to that volume, of which I believe that "No prophecy ever came by the will of man; but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Pet. 1. 21, R.V. To very much of what I have quoted I should fain hope that an answer has arisen in the reader's own mind, so that I do not need to say more. There are other things that will be met in the following pages, when I hope that the reader will get a fuller and fairer view of the way in which the successive parts of the history develop as the events occur in order. And where it seems proper to examine some of the statements more at length, I trust that I shall be found to have done so in



the course of my dealing with the passages of Scripture concerned.

There is, indeed, one general remark which I should like to make, because it refers to an error into which the so-called critical writers seem continually to fall, if it is not the false premiss which vitiates very much of their reasoning. When we point to some testimony in the first four Books of Moses, or in Deuteronomy, or in Joshua, Judges, or Samuel, it is common to reply that this passage is an interpolation by a late writer, and must not be used as evidence. I refuse to admit that the objection is valid. Take Deuteronomy, for instance. I am firmly convinced that the book is the composition of Moses, in the sense in which we may make such an affirmation of any book, notwithstanding the possibility that it has been given to the world by an editor (of whom, however, I know nothing, and cannot say that he ever existed), who has felt himself at liberty to make certain little changes.\* In these circumstances I am entitled to make use of the evidence of Deuteronomy no less than the critic is entitled to object to my doing so. It is with the judge and the jury that the decision rests. The critic who objects is no more than a pleader in the Court, and he is welcome to say the same of me; only that my client is in possession till judgment is given against him. We have to plead our case, each according to his light. But let it never be forgotten

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\* The reader may consult Canon Girdlestone's "Student's Deuteronomy" (Eyre and Spottiswoode, price 3s. 6d.). It is a corrected translation, with notes, and with references in full to the preceding and later books.

that the real judges, or jury, are the godly, intelligent people to whom the Word of God has been sent by their Father in heaven. It is the food of their souls, the joy of their hearts, the letter of directions for reaching their heavenly home, given to them by their Father, with whose handwriting and voice and sentiments they reckon themselves to be as familiar as any one can be. A critic is very likely to interpose and say, No: they are honest but unintelligent witnesses, whereas we are experts, whose opinion is entitled to prevail. To this there is the obvious reply that times without number the Courts have found that experts in the witness box differ as much as other witnesses do, and that their evidence needs to be sifted and weighed by people of good, sound sense and practical ability, though these people may be inferior to the experts in learning. And when a trial takes place in a Court, there is sometimes considerable jealousy of expert evidence, and unwillingness to rely upon it; not because it is in itself bad, but because too much has been demanded for it.

In studying Samuel's position, character, offices, and work, as these are presented to us chiefly in the first half of the First Book of Samuel, I shall take into account a great deal more matter which is to be found in the study of other parts of Scripture. Till the contrary is proved I shall assume that these books are a history that is true, and worthy of our belief: for my own part, I accept them as nothing less than the inspired Word of God. To me it is a great grief that this is so frequently denied or called in question, even

by some writers who seem to wish to restrict those unfortunate denials of theirs as much as possible. Their criticisms are the consequence of the disintegrating processes which they have been led to apply to the books of the Bible. And these disintegrating processes seem to me to rest upon principles which may quite be expected in the minds of writers who look on the books of the Bible as the products of the natural powers of man, but which I think ought not to be accepted by men who receive it as the divine record of the revelation of God our Saviour to lost men. I cannot but think that they have accepted these premisses of their critical arguments without due consideration. And my hope is that I may help my readers to appreciate the unity of the supposed various and inconsistent accounts in the Book of Samuel.

What Jewish writers call "The Former Prophets," namely, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, are the work of authors unknown to us; these names being not the names of the authors, but the titles of the matter which the books contain. I shall not discuss the authorship of the first half of First Samuel, the book with which I am directly concerned. I have not space for this discussion; but I incline to think that probably Samuel may have written this, or have left his memoranda for his "sons of the prophets" to put into shape. It seems to me a happy expression that Samuel may be regarded as the literary residuary legatee of the preceding times from Moses down to his own day. There is the direct testimony of 1 Chron. 29. 29, 30, that



Samuel was the historian of his own time. The very title, Book of Samuel (slightly changed afterwards, as the titles of Kings and of Chronicles also were, when each of these was divided into two books), bears testimony to the spirit of the theocratic age in which this name was given. But in a much later age, when the theocratic spirit was dying out, or dead, the Books of Samuel and Kings were thrown together under the title, The Four Books of Kings. Really Samuel was the most prominent individual around whom the history of the children of Israel, in all its aspects, civil and spiritual, revolves, from the decay of the age of the Judges until the full establishment of the age of the monarchy. It does seem to me probable that we have his writing here, yet this was not the reason of the title, The Book of Samuel. This was given because his was the great central influence in all the movements even throughout the reigns of Saul and David.

I have quoted the Authorised and the Revised Versions (A.V. and R.V.) indiscriminately, yet generally the Revised. I have, however, habitually retained the Divine name Jehovah, yet without thinking it necessary to alter this imperfect representation of the Hebrew sound of the name. We do not attempt such changes in the forms of other proper names when these are well established.

# ANALYTICAL TABLE OF CONTENTS.

## CHAPTER I.

### HISTORICAL POSITION OF SAMUEL VINDICATED.

	PAGE
Progress of Old Testament Revelation under Moses and Joshua— under Samuel and David—under Elijah and Elisha—under Ezra and Nehemiah . . . . .	1
Samuel, critical study of his life . . . . .	6
Examination of the present critical conceptions, as given by Dr. Robertson Smith . . . . .	8
Its tendencies—	
1.—To disintegrate Scripture, and even the individual books . . . . .	19
2.—To claim an authority for the critics' opinions such as cannot be conceded . . . . .	<i>ib.</i>
3.—To be to a large extent merely subjective . . . . .	20
4.—To be philosophical speculation . . . . .	22

## CHAPTER II.

### RELATION OF SAMUEL AND DAVID TO MOSES AND JOSHUA.

The Book of Judges, and the general characteristics of the time after Moses and Joshua . . . . .	24
It calls attention chiefly to the rulers in Israel, and the increasing firmness and stability of their position . . . . .	25
The history of the last two judges is given only in the Book of Samuel . . . . .	26
What Divine guidance the Judges enjoyed . . . . .	<i>ib.</i>
Prophets in the time of the Judges . . . . .	27
Priests and the tabernacle at Shiloh . . . . .	28
not without indications of development, such as—	
1.—The high-priestly family . . . . .	29
2.—The title, "Jehovah of Hosts" . . . . .	30
3.—The tendency toward making Shiloh the permanent home of the House of God . . . . .	31
Evidences of the religious unity of Israel at that time . . . . .	34
Prevalence of living religion then . . . . .	36
Policy of sparing the Canaanites . . . . .	38
Bad and better times intermingled, as in the personal history of Samson . . . . .	39

## CHAPTER III.

## THE CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH OF SAMUEL.

	PAGE
In the times of the Judges the word of Jehovah was rare—the need for Samuel—his birth as the ideal Nazirite amid the worthless priests . . . . .	41
The meaning of the name Samuel . . . . .	43
Religious influence of woman in Israel . . . . .	46
Hereditary position of Samuel's family, if he was a Levite . . . . .	47
Samuel was really a Levite . . . . .	<i>ib.</i>
Some of the circumstances of his childhood unfavourable . . . . .	51
Hannah's vow . . . . .	54
The vow fulfilled: Samuel brought to the temple and left there . . . . .	56
Samuel the child at the temple—contrast to Eli's sons . . . . .	59
Samuel's privileges as a boy at Shiloh . . . . .	60
Samuel serves as a Nazirite . . . . .	61
Hannah's song . . . . .	<i>ib.</i>
Prophecy in Israel—Hannah and the unnamed prophet . . . . .	64
This prophet's message to Eli . . . . .	65

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE PROPHETIC OFFICE OF SAMUEL.

Certain beginnings or preparations . . . . .	69
No open vision in Samuel's childhood . . . . .	<i>ib.</i>
The call of Samuel . . . . .	70
The prophetic message given to Samuel . . . . .	72
Samuel's growth and manifestation to Israel as a prophet . . . . .	75
The universal conviction as to this throughout Israel . . . . .	<i>ib.</i>
Jehovah appearing again in Shiloh as Samuel ministered . . . . .	76
Immediate influence of Samuel as a prophet and a leader in Israel . . . . .	77
Scripture testifies to Samuel's commanding position . . . . .	79
Samuel head of the line of prophets, and perhaps of their schools . . . . .	<i>ib.</i>
Prophecy is not simply prediction, yet includes it . . . . .	81
The prophet's task, to explain the Law of Moses and to apply it to present needs . . . . .	<i>ib.</i>
The prophetic writers of the history of David brought out the majesty of the kingdom of Jehovah, and explained the changing times that passed over David's head . . . . .	83
These changes, and the transitional nature of Samuel's work . . . . .	85
From Samuel's time a distinction between "prophet" and "seer" . . . . .	86
Connexion of prophecy with poetry and music . . . . .	88

## CHAPTER V.

## THE PRIESTLY WORK OF SAMUEL.

	PAGE
Samuel's training beside Eli and his sons . . . . .	91
The ark of Jehovah . . . . .	<i>ib.</i>
Superstitious trust in it, and crushing defeat by the Philistines . . . . .	92
The exile of the ark brought the people under Samuel for discipline . . . . .	93
The ark in the land of the Philistines . . . . .	94
The ark sent back by them . . . . .	95
Alleged difficulties in the narrative considered . . . . .	96
Probable gathering of the children of Israel at one of the feasts, welcoming the return of the ark . . . . .	100
The Levites of Beth-shemesh sinning, and suffering on account of their treatment of the ark . . . . .	102
The difficulty about the number of those smitten . . . . .	103
The ark sent on to the Gibeonites of Kirjath-jearim . . . . .	105
While it remains long there, Israel lament after Jehovah . . . . .	107
Samuel's opportunity for leading Israel to repentance . . . . .	108
His success and the peculiar services which marked it . . . . .	109
The unsuccessful attack by the Philistines . . . . .	111
Samuel offers sacrifice . . . . .	112
Samuel's deliberate assumption of the priestly office . . . . .	<i>ib.</i>
He combines the three offices: prophet, priest, and ruler—a second Moses . . . . .	113
Peculiarities of Samuel's first sacrifice on assuming the priestly office . . . . .	115
Samuel's regular and continued exercise of this office . . . . .	117
The priesthood of Aaron in the descendants of Levi . . . . .	<i>ib.</i>
Samuel not under them, yet not opposed to them . . . . .	119

## CHAPTER VI.

## SAMUEL AS JUDGE.

His high position attested by various passages of Scripture . . . . .	121
Principles, methods, and results of his administration:—	
1.—Independence of the Philistines, and rest from them . . . . .	122
2.—Peace with the Canaanite races . . . . .	123
An authoritative reversal of the policy enjoined by the Law of Moses . . . . .	124
This reversal was permanent—its importance . . . . .	126
Condensed statement of the principles of his administration . . . . .	127
Why he went on circuit in judging Israel . . . . .	<i>ib.</i>
The three places chosen for his circuits . . . . .	129
Why he chose three places so near to one another . . . . .	130
The link which connected the two principles of his policy . . . . .	134

CHAPTER VI.— <i>cont.</i>		PAGE
Samuel aimed at strengthening the prophetic and princely offices, while nothing is said of the priesthood . . . . .		136
His relations to the priests perhaps like those of Moses to Aaron and his sons . . . . .		<i>ib.</i>
Various places where the empty tabernacle rested . . . . .		138
David's two places of public religious services; the credibility of the account of this in Chronicles . . . . .		139
Were Samuel's three places connected with the three feasts? . . . . .		140

## CHAPTER VII.

## SAMUEL HANDS OVER HIS OFFICE AS JUDGE TO A KING.

The misconduct of his sons, and the demand to have a king . . . . .		143
What sin was there in the people asking for a king? . . . . .		145
Nothing essentially wrong, since it lay within the provisions of their constitution and the promises to the patriarchs . . . . .		147
But, (A) It was not a constitutional king that they desired . . . . .		148
(b) They did not regard Samuel's anxieties about the course their king would take . . . . .		<i>ib.</i>
(c) They looked on the kingdom as a charm to save them against evils for which they sought only an outward cure . . . . .		151
(d) They had no respect for Samuel's claims upon them as their actual excellent ruler . . . . .		152
(e) They overlooked the fact that Jehovah was their true king . . . . .		154
Contrast between their conduct and David's at a later time . . . . .		<i>ib.</i>
How Samuel yielded at last to a request not unlawful . . . . .		156
Other divine warnings as to the future of their history . . . . .		158
Samuel's ideal of the kingdom more or less taken up by Saul and by David . . . . .		<i>ib.</i>

## CHAPTER VIII.

## HOW SAUL WAS THREE TIMES MADE KING BY SAMUEL.

§ 1. *Saul made king the first time.*

In this, Samuel acting chiefly as a prophet . . . . .		160
Saul's family—two agencies at work in first bringing him to Samuel . . . . .		161
Samuel not wholly unknown to Saul . . . . .		162
Samuel knew Saul, and gave him such honour as indicated his intention to offer him the kingdom . . . . .		164
Conjectural reading that the fat tail was given to Saul . . . . .		165 <i>n.</i>
Subsequent confidential conversation about the kingdom . . . . .		166



CHAPTER VIII.— <i>cont.</i>	PAGE
The anointing of Saul . . . . .	166
The three signs given by Samuel to Saul . . . . .	167
Saul's disobedience in not going down to Gilgal . . . . .	171
Why Samuel wished Saul to meet Israel at the three places of worship . . . . .	172
His test here of Saul's willingness to receive Divine guidance through Samuel . . . . .	173

§ 2. *Saul made king the second time.*

Samuel the prophet shows his priestly character in his use of the lot . . . . .	176
Was Saul anointed a second time? . . . . .	178
The acclamation of the people—"The Manner of the Kingdom," written by Samuel . . . . .	179
The sons of Belial and their treatment of Saul . . . . .	180

§ 3. *Saul made king the third time.*

The complete success in the transition from a patriarchal commonwealth to a monarchy mostly due to Samuel . . . . .	181
This third time Samuel acted much as chief civil ruler . . . . .	182
Saul's exploit at Jabesh-gilead—consequent elation of the people . . . . .	183
Samuel brings them to Gilgal and renews the kingdom there . . . . .	185
Samuel's address in handing over the government to Saul . . . . .	186

§ 4. *The connexion of Saul's appointment with Samuel's three sacred places.*

Samuel's care to connect the introduction of the monarchy with the old order . . . . .	188
His three sacred places after Shiloh had been rejected . . . . .	189
Subsequent obscurity of those places . . . . .	191
Possibly Samuel arranged for one of the feasts at each . . . . .	193

CHAPTER IX.

THE COMPLETENESS OF THIS QUIET REVOLUTION BY SAMUEL.

§ 1. *Subsequent relations of Samuel with Saul.*

Samuel's interest in the kingdom of Saul, as lawful yet carrying serious dangers with it . . . . .	194
Saul "took the kingdom"—conveys an unpleasant hint . . . . .	195
Saul's successful fighting with enemies on every side . . . . .	196
Generous appreciation of the good in his administration and his family life . . . . .	197

CHAPTER IX.— <i>cont.</i>		PAGE
Saul's <i>first</i> great offence . . . . .		198
Samuel boldly rebukes him . . . . .		200
The high priest attends Saul in the field . . . . .		<i>ib.</i>
Saul's <i>second</i> great offence, and Samuel's sadness and faithfulness . . . . .		201
The lofty morality and spirituality of Samuel's teaching . . . . .		204
Some noticeable particulars in the final parting . . . . .		205
Saul's <i>third</i> great offence—the witch of Endor . . . . .		207

§ 2. *Samuel's relations with David.*

Samuel commanded to anoint David—he obeys . . . . .		209
David appointed only once, not thrice like Saul . . . . .		210
Samuel keeps aloof from politics, and trains prophets . . . . .		211
Samuel and David under Saul's jealous government . . . . .		213
David's appointment connected chiefly with Samuel as prophet and priest . . . . .		214
David adopts and carries forward Samuel's attempts at unity . . . . .		216
The attainment of complete unity under Solomon . . . . .		218
Little said of the priests in Saul's reign—what is said does not suggest that they had much power or influence . . . . .		<i>ib.</i>
Hints about their position in the reigns of Saul and David . . . . .		219
Samuel's relation to the empty tabernacle quite unknown . . . . .		222
The dual high priesthood under David . . . . .		<i>ib.</i>
It ended through Abiathar following Adonijah . . . . .		225
How did Zadok first become a high priest? . . . . .		226
Successive movements of the tabernacle after the loss of the ark—it was at Nob and at Gibeon . . . . .		227

CHAPTER X.

LITERARY RELATIONSHIP OF I SAMUEL TO THE EARLIER BOOKS.

His relationship shown—		
(1) in historical matters . . . . .		231
(2) in legal and ritual matters . . . . .		236
(3) in points of verbal resemblance . . . . .		241
(4) Differences suggesting that Samuel is the later book . . . . .		242

CHAPTER XI.

RECAPITULATION . . . . .		244
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## APPENDIX.

	PAGE
NOTE A.	
CRITICAL DISCUSSIONS ON THE SONG OF HANNAH . . . . .	251
NOTE B.	
"JEHOVAH APPEARED AGAIN IN SHILOH" (1 Sam. 3. 21) . . . . .	258
NOTE C.	
THE BOOK OF JASHAR . . . . .	260
NOTE D.	
THE CONSTITUTIONAL STATUTE OF THE REALM OF ISRAEL . . . . .	261
<hr/>	
INDEX . . . . .	274
<hr/>	

# SAMUEL AND HIS AGE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### HISTORICAL POSITION OF SAMUEL VINDICATED.

THE Old Testament offers us glimpses of unfallen man as he came from his Creator's hand ; yet offers these only so far as is necessary in order to make the history of Redemption intelligible. Even the Patriarchal age opens up the history of Redemption only as its foundations are laid broad and deep, and not yet rising into national importance, presenting it only as it appeared in the family. We might say that the children of God in that age were as yet too young to be sent to school ; their training was elementary, such as wise parents may give at home and informally to very little ones, training them chiefly by an occasional word and by examples. It is only after we have gone through the Book of Genesis that we see the children of God grown up into a nation, having passed through childhood and reached the stage at which they have become God's people. They are now sent to school under the discipline of the Law of Moses ; and from that time forward the discipline assumes a more advanced character, administered by the successors of Moses.

There is undoubted progress here. Yet it is not unconscious evolution through vast unknown ages : it is a history, which has been placed in our hands to study, written by ministers of Redemption, to whose words we listen, as they record and

explain authoritatively the workings of Jehovah. The course of the history of Israel under the Law of Moses calls attention to certain prominent men, who are of supreme importance, to whose influence a very great deal was owing; so that the people could not be the same after these men had passed away as they had been before these servants and ambassadors of God began their work. And we may observe a tendency in these men to appear in pairs, which is so far like our Lord's disciples being sent out two and two. Yet there is also a difference. Those representative men in the progress of the Old Testament may be said to have gone out two and two: the second, however, somewhat later than the first, whose work he supplemented or completed.

(1) **Moses and Joshua.**—It is not Moses and Aaron; though in some respects Aaron might be considered the double of Moses, summoned to the work at the passionate desire of Moses, who felt himself unable to speak. Yet in the actual history Aaron is seen to be less reliable than Moses, from the disastrous day on which he was implicated in the making of the golden calf, until that other day when both the brothers failed to believe in God and to sanctify him at the waters of Meribah. It was when this offence had brought on both brothers the heavy chastisement of exclusion from the Promised Land, that Joshua, who had long been the assistant of Moses, was designated publicly as his successor, to accomplish the conquest of Canaan and its partition among the Twelve Tribes. Joshua did this work admirably; but it was only the work which Moses might himself have done, and which he would have done had he acted up to his knowledge and professions.

(2) **Samuel and David.**—It is not Samuel and Saul, for Saul became a wreck. But David was chosen to take up the work which dropped from the hand of Saul, and to carry out the wishes and instructions of Samuel. The student of the way in



which the institutions of Moses were carried out observes how the grace of God flowed in three streams along three channels, principally, if not exclusively; namely, the prophetic, the priestly, and the judicial or kingly; and that these three channels were cut deeply, so that along each of them flowed that special grace which was generally kept apart from the other two. In the ordinary working of those institutions among the people of Israel the priests stood apart from the prophets on the one side, and from the kings on the other. Thus the prophet Samuel anointed the king, first Saul, and after Saul's rejection, David: Samuel marked out his office to the ruler, but after doing so, he threw himself as much as ever into his own prophetic duties. Nevertheless, these separate channels had been dug—that is, they were the consequence of certain positive laws, and in this sense they were artificial. There was nothing in the nature of things to make it impossible that they, all three, or any two of them, might be combined in the hands of one man. This had been the case at the first start; the three offices were perfectly combined in Moses. For some reason unknown to us, the offices of priest and judge had been united, perhaps for forty years, in the hands of Eli; thus it came to pass that they were so united at the time of Samuel's birth. It is an entire misunderstanding of the case when there is an opposition supposed by some writers between the prophetic and the priestly offices in Israel, as if these represented two hostile forces at work in the formation of the religion of Israel. There was opposition offered by godly prophets to ungodly priests from time to time: this goes without saying. And ungodly priests and ungodly prophets are recorded to have worked together, as might well be expected. But in themselves the two offices, alike owing their institution to the God of all grace, were complementary or supplementary, meant to act in harmony. There are known instances of priests and Levites who were also

prophets : and if true religion had flourished in Israel as it ought to have done, who knows but this would have been the rule, and not the exception ? Something of the priest unquestionably appears in Samuel, as we shall see, when he took the horn of oil and anointed Saul, and also David at a later time. Indeed, the unequalled glory of Samuel is that he acted in all the three offices—prophet, priest, and judge—like a second Moses. It must be emphasised that this was a unique case in the history of Israel : Joshua the successor of Moses, and David the successor of Samuel, succeeded to the civil office and to nothing more. It is not till we come to the end of the Mosaic dispensation that we once more meet with the union of the three offices in Him to whom Moses and the prophets bare witness, our Saviour, the Lord Jesus, whom we therefore name the Christ—that is, the Anointed.

(3) **Elijah and Elisha.**—In Psalm 99. 6, Samuel is linked on to Moses thus : “Moses and Aaron among His priests, and Samuel among them that call upon His name.” In the same way we find Elijah linked on to Moses in Mal. 4. 4, 5. No one can doubt the intimate connexion of Elijah with Elisha : the former, indeed, was expressly commanded to anoint the latter to be prophet in his room (1 Kings 19. 16). Yet there were differences between them which strike everyone, and there were developments. Elisha was not a solitary ; he had laid hold of masses of his countrymen, and he had influence with the king and his court. And standing on the footing which Elijah had won for him, Elisha was able to accomplish what Elijah had not been able even to attempt, and also to hand his work on to others with some hope that it would be permanent. These two prophets are men surprisingly great ; they stand alone in the history of religion among the Ten Tribes. They were so great in action that they do not seem to have found time for writing. Their call was to speak, but specially to act, in the face of an

apostate king and his dynasty, among a people who had almost ceased to be the people of Jehovah. Their mission was partly to hurl the house of Ahab from the throne, and in consequence to give one last opportunity to the larger of the two monarchies in Israel, whose captivity had been a gradually advancing process from the day on which the Ten Tribes threw off allegiance to the house of David and to the priesthood of the house of Aaron (1 Kings 14. 6-16). Yet amid the perils and confusions of that period, it was becoming more and more necessary that the prophets should give themselves to writing down in the Word of God the lessons which were entrusted to them; and these were disseminated over both sections of the community into which the Twelve Tribes had been split. The little kingdom of Judah survived much longer than that of Ephraim, because in Judah the basis of all spiritual well-being had been much less injured, and even where flagrant evils had broken out, there arose such great reforming kings of the house of David as Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah.

(4) **Ezra and Nehemiah.**—This pair laboured among the men of Israel, a mere remnant, who returned to Jerusalem from the Babylonian captivity, Ezra beginning some thirteen years earlier than his coadjutor. That feeble remnant had taken advantage of the edict of Cyrus permitting them to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their temple and restore their worship. In this effort the appointed governor, himself a representative of the house of David, and a noble high priest, who worked along with him, had enjoyed the greatly needed aid of two prophets. But the written prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah are of very small bulk, and they were followed by only one more prophet, who added very little to our Scriptures. Tradition credits Ezra the priest, in his better-known character of scribe, with one very important service to religion, when he gathered those Scriptures together to be the rule of faith and manners to Israel, now that

additions were not expected to the revealed will of God. So far as appears, Ezra did not meddle with civil affairs. At least, in so far as he did interfere, it must have been because he received from his royal master authority to restore the Mosaic commonwealth in a restricted sense, no longer as independent, but as under the supremacy of the kings of Persia, to whom Israel remained subject. Yet, whatever practical results came out of this authorisation, probably these were arrangements of his friend Nehemiah, who returned to Jerusalem a few years later than Ezra. This was in the exercise of talents for administration, of which Nehemiah's memoirs furnish repeated instances, talents which may have been discovered or turned to practical account at the court of the king of Persia whom he served.

The object of this volume is to examine the position, character, offices, and work of Samuel, the leading man in the second of these four pairs ; or, as it might otherwise be stated, the leading man in the first pair after Moses and his assistant Joshua, who laid the foundations of the Jewish state. Samuel's importance is next to that of Moses.

But do sufficient materials exist for such a study ? Is there enough known of the entire course of the history of the Old Testament Church, and enough of the life of this individual ? In answering these questions, one must remember that there is at present a popular method of study which assumes to itself the designation *critical*, and bestows the title of *critics* upon those who adopt and act upon its maxims. Thus Professor Robertson Smith, in his work *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, 2nd ed., pp. 137-8, writes to the following effect :—  
“ All critics agree ” as to splitting up the narrative about Samuel into two accounts, which “ cannot both be equally genuine, and there can be no doubt which is the older and the better one.”

This is quoted in the meantime, not for discussion, but merely to make it plain what he means by critics. Again, in a passage which deals with topics outside those to which this volume is restricted, he explains how the same unequal reliability is the characteristic of other parts of the Bible. He says: "The chief case in point upon which critics have come to a very definite conclusion is that of Chronicles as compared with the Book of Kings. . . . . According to the ordinary laws of research, the Book of Kings is a source of the first class, and the Chronicles have a very secondary value. . . . . The cases where the Chronicler flatly contradicts the Book of Kings are pretty numerous; but there is not one of them where an impartial historical judgment will decide in favour of the latter account. . . . . The Chronicler is no authority on any point that touches difference of usage between his own time and that of the old monarchy; but, further, he does not hesitate to make material changes in the tenor of narratives that do not agree with his doctrine of the uniformity of religious institutions before and after the exile" (pp. 140, 142, 144). It is easy to find language in some writers who are called critics that is as unfounded as it is offensive to every believer. But it is better to confine attention to men of the highest rank among critical writers—men whose Christian faith need not be impugned, though their language, of which specimens have just been given, is to be deplored.\*

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\* For this reason I confine my quotations and observations very much to two personal friends whom I named in the preface, one dead and one living, Professors Robertson Smith and Driver. I am often compelled to differ from them, but it is with reluctance and regret. Having made these quotations from Dr. Robertson Smith, as they show the attitude of the critical school towards Chronicles, a matter which scarcely comes within consideration in this volume, I may refer to what I reckon valuable criticism of Chronicles from a very different point of view, embracing happy illustrations of the truthfulness and accuracy of the information which it gives us, in the work of Professor A. van Hoonaker of Louvain, "*Le Sacerdoce Lévitique.*" London: Williams and Norgate, 1899.



Standing aloof from the body of men which is said to comprehend all critics, and not attempting to plunge into the boundless and tempestuous ocean of Old Testament criticism—in their sense of the term—let us receive the history of Samuel as it is recorded in Scripture with faith and reverence. In the course of Scripture history, from Moses to Ezra, the place of Samuel is easily found ; and the more his work is examined the more interesting does it become, and the more do the several parts throw light on one another, and give one another mutual support. If a man cannot open a lockfast place, it seems more natural to suppose that he is using a wrong key than that his key is the right one, but that some ignorant or mischievous person has put on a wrong lock, whose wards must be wrenched till they break. The critics have got hold of a wrong key, or they have made a wrong one for themselves. It is therefore not wonderful that they cannot make anything satisfactory of the book as it lies before them. So it lay before our Lord in the days of His flesh. So it lay before the Apostle Paul. So it lay before his beloved assistant Timothy, who from infancy had fed upon those Scriptures which have been given to God's children, and on which he was nourished by his mother and grandmother with the happiest results.

The style of criticism which Dr. Robertson Smith reckoned convincing evidence of the existence of two discordant bodies of tradition which the composer or editor of the present Book of Samuel endeavoured to reconcile and combine is thus presented by him at p. 130 : " A very simple case is the two-fold explanation of the proverb, ' Is Saul also among the prophets ? ' (1 Sam. 10. 12 ; *ibid.* 19. 24.) The same proverb cannot have two origins, but nothing is commoner than to find two traditions about the origin of a single saying. The compiler of the Book of Samuel had two such traditions before him, and thought it best to insert both without deciding which deserved

the preference. And here it may be noticed further that 1 Sam. 19. 24 is inconsistent with 1 Sam. 15. 35, which tells us that Samuel never saw Saul after the death of Agag. The English departs from its usual fidelity when it softens this absolute statement and writes, 'Samuel came no more to see Saul.' As for the first of his instances, there is not a shred of evidence that the compiler thinks he is giving us two traditions of the origin of the saying; but he mentions two occasions on which the saying obtained wide currency, because both times Saul prophesied under the influence of Samuel. The first time was when people were surprised and perplexed at this singular specimen of a prophet, and they wondered who had trained him. But Saul did not long continue to prophesy; perhaps his prophesying came to an end almost as soon as it began, like that of Eldad and Medad, recorded in Num. 11. 25 (R.V). Long afterwards his conduct was so singular that people remembered what had been said, probably when they were young, and they repeated the saying; and so the proverb which might otherwise have been forgotten obtained a new lease of popularity and stuck to him. Dr. Robertson Smith's second proof is connected with an alleged mistranslation, which, however, is found in the R.V. as well as in the A.V., and seems a good rendering of the Hebrew, "Samuel added no more to see Saul." Saul, no doubt, was once again in the presence of Samuel, in that state of excitement in which he lay naked before him. But in this scene Samuel was passive and not active in respect of Saul, so that if it is to be called an interview, it was one forced upon Samuel; whereas something active, which he had aimed at doing, and had made an effort to do, is the natural interpretation of the Hebrew phrase, which could scarcely be translated word for word, "Samuel added not to see Saul." The hint that the English translation departs from its usual fidelity and softens the absolute statement that Samuel never

saw Saul after the death of Agag, is not in Dr. Robertson Smith's usual style. Professor H. P. Smith's comment on the earlier passage is, "The contradiction to 19. 23 (24 ?) is obvious, and shows the difference of the sources." The *kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament*, dating from the middle of this century, at that time had the reputation of a standard work among the critical party, and Thenius was a valued contributor to the work; nor are his services forgotten even now. His explanation of the clause, however, is that of the English Bible, "er besuchte ihn nicht mehr"; with no further remark, except that in a parenthesis he gives the names of the older *exegetisches Handbuch*, belonging to the end of the eighteenth century—a work certainly in no way prejudiced in favour of the authority of the writers of the Old Testament, and also of Maurer, whose commentary was confined to matters of grammar and of the lower criticism. But the critical school of the last thirty years go further than their predecessors.

It is in the Book of Samuel,\* and especially in the history of Saul, where "the Septuagint sometimes helps us to dissect out late additions to the story." At other times Dr. Robertson Smith feels guided only by internal evidence. Such, for example, are the two accounts of Saul's rejection by Samuel at Gilgal, of which one is found in 1 Sam. 15, and the other from 1 Sam. 13. 7 (second half) to v. 15 (first half), to which chap. 10. 8 must once have formed the introduction. "Anyone who reads chap. 15 with care must see that the writer of this narrative knew nothing of an earlier rejection of Saul; and, further, the Gilgal episode in chap. 13 gives no reasonable sense. . . . The story is unhistorical, and nothing

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\* For though we are accustomed to speak of two Books of Samuel, and of Kings, and of Chronicles, yet in each of these cases the ancient Jews and the Hebrew Bible recognise only one book.

more than an early and unauthorised interpolation, as appears from the fact that both 13. 7b-15a, and the associated verse, 10. 8, disclose the context of the passages in which they are inserted."—Robertson Smith, pp. 133-4. The reader of this study of Samuel may, perhaps, come to think these confident statements very incorrect. A closer and calmer survey of the history may bring out the meaning which the critics have failed to discover, and the consequent evidence of the unity and harmony of passages which have been pronounced inconsistent and destitute of reason.

In pp. 134-7 Dr. Robertson Smith goes into this at some length. Thus, p. 135 : "The main clues to this analysis are two. In the first place, the status of Samuel is different in chaps. 8 and 9 ; in the former he is acknowledged judge of all Israel, in the latter he is a seer of great local reputation, but hardly known outside of his own district." This statement seems to him so certain, probably so important, that he repeats it substantially in the next paragraph. It is, however, an unsupported assertion, which closer examination shows to be erroneous.

Even if Saul did not know Samuel (of which there is no proof), this might better be explained by the ungodly carelessness of Saul or his family. But the history is surely to be read as indicating that Saul and his servant knew the seer, and knew that they were at his city, perhaps only a mile or two distant from their own. Saul's words to Samuel at the utmost suggest ignorance not of the man Samuel, but of his abode : "Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is." If the words are thought to indicate ignorance of the man, it might well have been pretended ignorance, assumed for a purpose.

But it was more probably language meant to give an impression of the speaker's humility, or to gauge Samuel's feelings and disposition. Moreover, how does the critical hypothesis

agree with the summons attributed to the same narrative in chap. 11. 7—"Through all the borders of Israel . . . . . whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel" ? The easy way of escape, no doubt, is to reject the words "and after Samuel" as an interpolation. So on the next page Dr. Robertson Smith places them within brackets—anyone who reads many critical books becomes familiar with this style of argument. Even Dr. Driver, *Literature of the Old Testament*, p. 166, discussing this subject, says in the off-hand style of the critics, though with more caution than some of them, "The notice 9. 2b = 10. 23b has been introduced in *one* of these passages from the other." Dr. H. P. Smith comments on 9. 2 : "The clause recurs in 10. 23, where it is entirely appropriate (at Saul's first appearance in public). Here it seems to have come in from there by a late hand." There is not a pretence of evidence for either of the assertions. Rather one ought to say that the occurrence of the clause in both passages incidentally illustrates how the so-called two narratives agree ; but this agreement would be fatal to the critical hypothesis, and the critics must get rid of the clause in one or other of the places in which it is found.

Dr. Robertson Smith continues : "In the second place, chap. 11 presents Saul to us as still a private person. The messengers from Jabesh do not come specially to seek him, and he acts by no public authority, but on his own initiative, under the impulse of the Divine Spirit. But in chap. 9" (probably a misprint for 10. 17-24) "he has already been made king amidst the acclamations of the whole nation." What a host of questions does Dr. Robertson Smith's assertion call forth ! *First.*—If those messengers did not "come specially" to seek Saul, did they come to seek him at all ? If they did not, what led them to this wholly unknown private person, whose description of his family and himself in this narrative is to be

seen in chap. 9. 21? *Secondly*.—How is it that the messengers came to that little town of Gibeah, which is not once named in the so-called older story? No doubt the messengers reserved their full liberty to do everything they could during the seven days of respite which the Ammonite king had conceded, “that they might send messengers into all the borders of Israel.” Time, however, was extremely precious, and they would need to select the most likely places. *Thirdly*.—Is not the sentence with which he supplements his argument at p. 136 purely imaginary, without any foundation, and with no probability of being true? It runs thus: “Jabesh-Gilead was threatened by Nahash the Ammonite, and the messengers whom the Gileadites sent through the land to demand succour were everywhere received with tears of helpless sympathy.” *Fourthly*.—What is meant by the contrast between acting “by no public authority, but on his own initiative under the impulse of the Divine Spirit?” Scripture tells that “the Spirit of God came mightily upon Saul when he heard these words.” This was the highest authority known in the commonwealth of Israel. The filling and clothing by the Spirit was that which made a man a judge in Israel, or proved him to be a judge. It was the very authority under which Gideon and Jephthah acted; in virtue of which the men who did not follow them were made traitors to the commonwealth, and to Jehovah who was its head, and were therefore subjected to signal condign punishment. Saul therefore felt himself entitled to threaten all who did not follow him and Samuel with the loss of their chief worldly possessions. The peculiar verb in this phrase is the one repeatedly used of Samson in the exercise of his office as judge. “The Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon him.” But certainly if Samson or Saul had been making false pretensions to this gift of the Spirit, they rendered themselves liable to the severest punishments which Jehovah, the invisible head of the

state, had denounced against any who usurped the offices of prophet, priest, or ruler in His commonwealth. Saul then acted on his right, as he was known to be the king.

Dr. Robertson Smith proceeds (p. 135): "According to the older story (A), the establishment of the kingship in Israel was not of man's seeking, but of God. The Hebrews were hard pressed by the Philistines and other foes, against whom they could make no head for want of organisation and a recognised captain." This view of the situation compels the critics to join the very different account which Samuel gives to the people before laying down his office, which they accept as just and true (chap. 12. 6-12, and indeed the whole chapter), to the other story. The only hint of any *need* for a king in chap. 9 is at v. 16; and this, when it stands alone, is hard to reconcile with the account of Samuel and the Philistines in chap. 7. 2-17. Dr. Driver, in his *Literature of the Old Testament*, ascribes to it a later origin than to the first six chapters of the book, connecting chaps. 8, 10. 17-27<sup>2</sup>, and 12. Dr. Robertson Smith continues: "Only one man in Israel, the seer Samuel, who in this narrative appears as little known beyond his own district, saw by divine revelation that the remedy lay in the appointment of a king, and was guided to recognise the leader of Israel in a young man, the son of a Benjamite noble, who came to consult him on a trivial affair of lost asses. Seizing his opportunity, Samuel took Saul aside and anointed him king in the name of Jehovah, commanding him to return home and await an occasion to prove his vocation by deeds . . . . Nahash was defeated; the Israelites knew that they had found a leader, and with one consent they went to Gilgal and made Saul king before the Lord."

There are matters of minor inaccuracy which are excusable in a writer of novels, but are less suitable in a historical critic. Such are the representation of Saul's father as a Benjamite

noble, while Saul's own account is very different; and of Samuel's calm and well-regulated dealing, in a new and very difficult matter, as if it had been seizing his opportunity. But, as formerly, one is led to ask some questions on this statement. *First.*—How was it that a large company (there were about thirty guests who had been invited) came to the feast at which Samuel anointed Saul to be king, if this seer did not occupy a commanding position far beyond his own district? *Secondly.*—How did this seer come to sacrifice and hold a great sacrificial feast in the city, as everyone there knew he was going to do, the very day that he returned to his own house from some outside occupation of which this chapter tells nothing, unless he was recognised as a priest as well as a prophet? This question is the more to be pressed, because of the novel step he took when he anointed Saul. The A.V. says “a vial of oil,” but the R.V. is more exact (as again it is in the similar passage, 1 Kings 1. 39), “*the* vial of oil.” Did this seer, little known beyond his own district, carry about with him a bottle of oil for anointing people, and was he on the outlook for a king? Or was this the vial of oil belonging to the tabernacle, with which the high priests had been anointed? and modifying this, did the little-known seer inaugurate the practice of anointing the kings? *Thirdly.*—It was a common experience with prophets not to have any honour in their own country. Let it, however, be supposed that Samuel was a seer of great local reputation, though scarcely known out of his own district. How was he able to make the whole Twelve Tribes take part, heartily and unanimously, in a revolution in their constitution, from an easy patriarchal administration which had left every man to do that which was right in his own eyes, to a stiff monarchy like that of the surrounding nations? And how did he succeed in bringing them to confer this new honour and authority on one so unlikely as Saul, on the strength of a single



happy exploit? *Fourthly*.—How did Saul contrive to send his messengers, with the divided oxen, throughout all the borders of Israel? This was what the men of Jabesh-Gilead planned to do (the trifling difference of prepositions, “unto” and “throughout,” chap. 11. 3 and 7, is only in the English Versions), but which there is no reason to think that they actually did. And how came this summons by Saul to follow him, especially if one adopts the critical advice to expunge the name of Samuel, which stands along with Saul’s, to meet with such a response that they came out as one man? *Fifthly*.—Nor does it appear that the critic takes account of things in chaps. 9 and 10, which are far from favouring his hypothesis. Thus (1) Saul is not appointed only, one might say not chiefly, to save Jehovah’s people out of the hand of the Philistines (chap. 9. 16), but (*v.* 17) to “have authority over My people Israel.” The peculiar verb here used, עָצַר, suggests that the most prominent idea connected with his appointment was such civil control as Samuel had exercised, according to chap. 7, and the want of which in the administration of his sons had embittered the feelings of the people (chap. 8. 1–5). These, however, are passages relegated by the critics to another writer. (2) He takes no notice at all of the very important command in chap. 10. 8, “And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal; and, behold, I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come unto thee, and show thee what thou shalt do.” This silence is the more noteworthy, because he quotes from the preceding verse how Saul should “do as occasion serve thee; for God is with thee.” And so *v.* 8 makes it manifest that this acting of Saul was not to be without reference to Samuel, nor independently of him. (3) He gives no hint of an explanation why Samuel proposed (chap. 11. 14, 15) that the people should go to Gilgal, and

renew the kingdom there, and how it happened that all the people did renew it before Jehovah. For anything that the critical hypothesis teaches, they might as well have done so on the battlefield, after the victory over Nahash. It was there, according to the history given in the Book of Samuel, that the people said to Samuel, "Who is he that said, Shall Saul reign over us? Bring the men, that we may put them to death." Then Saul interposed with the words, "There shall not a man be put to death this day; for to-day Jehovah hath wrought salvation in Israel." If the critics are right in denying that the passages in which Gilgal is mentioned, such as chap. 10. 8, belong to the older account, one is puzzled by the abrupt mention of Gilgal here, without reason or explanation. Dr. H. P. Smith comments on chap. 10. 8 thus: "That the verse does not belong to the original narrative should be evident. It flatly contradicts the preceding command to Saul, to act according to his own judgment and the leadings of Providence. It evidently prepares for the paragraph 13. 8-15, which also is an interruption to the flow of the narrative." All this mass of assertion will be best dealt with by a plain exposition of the passages in their natural position and connexion.

Dr. Robertson Smith proceeds (p. 136): "In the second account (B) all this vivid concrete picture disappears, and we find in its place a meagre skeleton of narrative only just sufficient to support an exposition, in the form of speeches,\* of the author's judgment upon the Hebrew kingship as an institution not strictly compatible with the ideal of Jehovah's sovereignty in Israel." The comparative vividness of the painting and the comparative value of the speeches may be a matter of taste, open to dispute. Some readers may find most vividness in the dramatic representation by successive

speeches; the callous indifference of the people to Samuel's claims upon them; the tender reply of Jehovah to Samuel's prayers; the faithfulness with which Samuel spoke to the people about their sin, as he obeyed the Divine communication made to him in the way he had already acted many a time among them (see chap. 3. 19-21, and see his dealings with Eli); the sharp-cut representation of the election of Saul by lot, of Samuel's recommendation of him, and of the response made by the people.

Having asserted that in this document the Hebrew kingship is an institution not strictly compatible with the ideal of Jehovah's sovereignty in Israel, he describes how "Samuel remonstrates, but is divinely instructed to grant their wish, after warning them that to seek a human king is to depart from Jehovah, and that they will repent too late of their disobedience, when they experience the heavy hand of despotism," etc. This statement too will be afterwards corrected by a straightforward exposition. In the meantime it is enough to make the counter-affirmation that Samuel never asserted "that to seek a human king is to depart from Jehovah." If he had asserted this, he must have refused to have anything to do with the proceeding. What he actually did was this: he pointed out alarming difficulties in their proceedings, arising out of the spirit in which they were acting; and he may also have felt in his own spirit that he was insulted, and that Jehovah had been deeply wronged in the treatment of His servant.

The study of Samuel's life and times, interesting in itself, will become more so when it is understood in what direction the present-day criticism has interfered with the conceptions which arise in the minds of ordinary readers of the Bible. Perhaps three or four things in it may have already struck them.

*First.*—The critical spirit is unwilling to look at Scripture as a connected whole, as the authoritative message from God to man in respect of the way of salvation, harmoniously opening up more and more till it reaches perfection in our Lord Jesus Christ—that is, in the gospels and other writings of His companions and servants. A critic takes up a single book, isolates it, or even tears it into fragments, which he assigns to different imaginary writers, who are said to be unconnected, and often at variance with one another. This is considered to be scientific treatment of the book, perhaps as a botanist tears a flower to pieces and concentrates his attention on some of the fragments which he holds in his hands. By all means examine Scripture with concentrated attention, but as a living whole; comparing spiritual things with spiritual, and understanding that there is a great deal in each individual passage which refers back to earlier portions of the revelation, sometimes more distinctly, sometimes less so.

*Secondly.*—In breaking up the Books of Scripture into the compositions of this and that imaginary author (which they may feel entitled to do for a working hypothesis on their own responsibility), they are apt to refuse to admit that such references exist as the reader is apt on his part to produce. In the Pentateuch, for instance, this paragraph or sentence is said to be written by the Elohist, this by the Jehovist, this by the Deuteronomist, and this by the priestly editor; these being the more important, while there may be many more, less important or more dubious. All these imaginary authors have dates assigned to them later, usually much later, than the times of Samuel; although it is conceded that perhaps traditions had floated in the minds of the people, some of which may possibly have been earlier reduced to writing. Following on this mass of suppositions

there are Deuteronomic redactions of Joshua and Judges, which are necessarily held to be later than Deuteronomy itself. Now, as the antiquity of these books is denied, probably by all the schools of critics, objection is made to any reference back from the times of Samuel to those books. This objection cannot be sustained. In trials in our civil courts there are often scientific witnesses on certain points, there are experts, witnesses who state their opinion of matters brought into court, say as to the authenticity and credibility of certain documents. But it is not the witnesses who *decide* these points, not even those who are experts, as these critics often loftily claim to be. It is the jury who have to determine the weight to be attached to the opinions of the witnesses; and in those public trials it is often the opinion of experts which is handled with greatest severity by the good common sense of those who take cognisance of it. Applying this to the case in hand, it is the Church of God, in its widest sense, which is the jury, like "the twelve tribes scattered abroad," or "the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, etc., elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," to whom the epistles of the apostles James and Peter are addressed. The supreme judge is the Spirit of God, He by whom holy men were moved when they brought to us the Holy Scriptures. This Word is to judge us at the last day; and we cannot be too reverent, as well as loving and intelligent, when we handle it as critics—that is, as judges.

*Thirdly.*—Very much of this criticism is purely subjective. A critic thinks and feels that so and so is the case, and he lays it down as a fact that this or that chapter or verse or clause or word is an interpolation, or has been altered from what he feels that the author must have written. And this

explains the division which Dr. Robertson Smith thought himself entitled or required to make between what he called the vivid pictures in the concrete older story and the second account with its meagre skeleton of narrative, only just sufficient to support an exposition in the form of speeches. Students of the criticism of the Pentateuch are familiar with this subjective process. P is the history reduced to a skeleton, very much names and numbers and genealogies; and afterwards, the formal prescriptions of the priestly code. JE is the very different writing of a prophetic narrator, who has had the advantage of using two writers, whom he might choose between or might combine, J and E. Nobody ever heard of these writers till this recent critical process began. No trace of them, or of their works, is to be found except in the ingenious minds of these critics, whose learning, labour, and acuteness have enabled them to discover what they consider differences of style and language, etc. And sustained effort is necessary to work one's way through their lists of words and phrases and other discriminating marks. The critics allege in reply, that similar lists are made out on the other side; but they overlook the essential difference in the two classes of lists. Those made by the critics are a part of their persistent reasoning in a circle: they infer the existence of these authors from the lists which critics have compiled; and then, assuming that these imaginary authors exist, they point for confirmation to these same lists. Those students who object to the critical processes and results are content to accept the traditional belief of the whole Jewish nation, so far as it can be traced backward in the history of the nation, and then forward, which was unanimously accepted, preserved, and transmitted; till in recent times the philosophical speculations of Jews who have more or less boldly broken away from the faith of their fathers have led them

to abandon the testimony which the Synagogue had handed over to the Christian Church, by whom it was received without hesitation. And students whose position is that they accept this unvarying tradition, at all events in its main and fixed teaching, until cogent reasons such as they have not yet met with shall induce them to give it up, rightly call attention to the fact that words and phrases and ideas run in a stream from the pages of those who have the reputation of being the original writers. And they trace the effects of this in the history, as it is recorded in narratives which have every appearance of verisimilitude, notwithstanding what the critics assert of contradictions and errors.

*Fourthly.*—It is this philosophical speculation which has bred the criticism to which we object. For practically it may be said to have begun with a man of pre-eminent mental power, Spinoza, the Jewish Pantheist, and, of course, Pantheists and Deists have adopted it, and they have worked it out with learning and skill and patience. The taste and earnestness and beauty with which these gossamer speculations have been set forth, in strong contrast to the vulgar style of the assaults upon Scripture which had been adopted by infidels at an earlier time, have certainly made an impression on many whose Christianity ought not to be impeached, like the two present-day divines of our own country who have been repeatedly named in this sketch. Nevertheless they have done themselves injury by attaching themselves to that critical school; and while endeavouring to keep clear of its anti-Christian elements, their endeavour really enervates the strength of the criticism which rejects supernatural religion. After all, some of these Christian critics grieve their fellow Christians by their language about the writers of Scripture, and even about our Lord's knowledge. And it is poor literary criticism which breaks up a narrative, apportioning

it among different writers, because more than one motive is represented as at work in one and the same action, each motive that is mentioned being held to be evidence of a different author. This supposed reason leads them to recognise two independent accounts of Saul being made king: the one, direct from God, to provide Israel with a leader against the Philistines; the other, to show how Israel invaded the sovereign rights of Jehovah by resolving to have an earthly king of their own, like the nations, and how Samuel exposed the sin and danger of the course they were taking. In the criticism of the Pentateuch there has been a good deal of this. No example is more familiar than the narrative of the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; as if there was any difficulty in understanding how these Levites and Reubenites, who encamped next to one another while they pitched their tents in the wilderness, might air their grievances against Moses to one another, and combine against him; though all the time Korah and his associates thought chiefly of the priestly office which they coveted, while the Reubenites thought more of rule in the congregation, to which the children of Jacob's eldest son may have considered that they had a peculiar claim.



## CHAPTER II.

## RELATIONSHIP OF SAMUEL AND DAVID TO MOSES AND JOSHUA.

IT has been already noticed that the history of the Old Testament Church advances, making continual progress, yet not at a uniform rate: there are remarkable epochs, and one observes how the progress stands connected with four pairs of men, in accordance with the overwhelming influence assigned to human personality in the entire history of the Church of God. The first of these pairs had been the founder, Moses, and his servant or assistant, Joshua. What then had been taking place between their time and that of the second pair, Samuel and David? The information which we have on this point is derived almost exclusively from the Book of Judges. The Apostle writes that "By the Law is the knowledge of sin," and that "The Law entered that the offence might abound." The Book of Judges is a singular record of Israel's sinning against Jehovah and of His interposing to save them. Apart from these cardinal topics, however, the book gives many pictures of the condition of Israel, politically, socially, morally; not to speak of many curious questions about its arrangement, chronological or otherwise, which need not be discussed here. There was much evil in many respects. For Joshua and his fellow-workers had not only set up the tabernacle at Shiloh; they had aimed at establishing the institutions of Moses throughout the Twelve Tribes, over the whole extent of the land of Canaan. The sad form of expression frequently recurs, "The children of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah"; and a general statement at the beginning makes it

plain that the writer wished his readers carefully to notice this. And it will afterwards be noted that there was a stricter party, as there was a laxer party, among those who had to face the difficult problem of reducing the theoretical teaching of Moses and Joshua to practice. Yet it would be a serious mistake to suppose that things were always and altogether bad. The history may more justly be compared with the records of a hospital, which tell of all the medical and surgical cases, without telling anything of the patients after they have been dismissed as cured. All that is habitually recorded is that the land had rest for a certain term of years.

It is also to be observed that while the grace of God in Israel ran along the three channels of prophecy, priesthood, and magistracy, there is extremely little said of the first two, attention being directed almost exclusively to the class of rulers, whose technical name, Judges, has been given to the book. Some of these judges were especially distinguished as warriors, saving Israel from the invaders who oppressed them; yet of at least one or two we never read that they were engaged in war; all their work, so far as known to us, was purely civil. Of this latter class one of the most conspicuous is Tola, who rose up to save Israel after the fall and death of Abimelech, who had usurped the office of king after the death of that great judge, his father, Gideon. It is also to be noted that the earlier judges, Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Barak with Deborah, and Gideon, rose up and saved Israel by some noble victory over an oppressing enemy; the land then enjoyed rest, which is not connected with the name of that individual judge. The beginnings of a transition, however, appear in a slightly altered formula in the history of the last of these. "The land had rest forty years in the days of Gideon." In Gideon's days, then, a change was coming over the thoughts and feelings of the people. "The men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou

over us, both thou and thy son, and thy son's son also : for thou hast saved us out of the hand of Midian. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you : Jehovah shall rule over you." His unworthy son, Abimelech, however, did usurp the post, with the title of king, and held it for three years. From that time forward the position of the judges seems to have become firmer, and their authority more consolidated ; and thenceforward the length of their several administrations is given. The most singular case is that of Samson, the last named in the Book of Judges : it might even be styled anomalous. For he also had a definite term of administration ; yet through his whole lifetime he never achieved independence for his country : "He judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years."

There is another marked peculiarity which concerns the two last judges, Eli and Samuel, that for their history, and for their very names, one must go outside the Book of Judges to that other which is named the Book of Samuel. Yet, the distinctive characteristics of the two books are well marked and recognised on all hands. Whatever be the explanation of the fact, this transition from the one book to the other, in order to complete the history of the Judges, is undeniable. And there is a parallel to this in the history of the next great personage, David. To complete David's history the reader needs to pass from the Book of Samuel to the Book of Kings, though these two books are as thoroughly distinguished as are the Books of Judges and Samuel.

There is not much said on the subject of the guidance from God which the Judges enjoyed in their official actings. Of three judges it is expressly recorded that the Spirit of Jehovah was upon them (Judg. 3. 10 ; 6. 34 ; 11. 29) ; and of Samson much the same is said. No doubt Barak received special direction through the prophetess Deborah, who singularly was

his partner in judging the people ; in fact, he refused to go out to fight unless she would go with him. It is a probable conjecture that the judge had the right to consult God by means of the Urim of the high priest ; since Moses, when constituting Joshua his successor, had promised him this assistance. Moreover, at the time when the line of judges does not seem yet to have begun, the Urim were consulted so by the assembled congregation (Judg. 1. 1 ; 20. 18, 23, 27-29). And there are occasionally similar accounts of Saul and David. Especially in the time of Saul's final rejection, it is written that "Jehovah answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets" (1 Sam. 28. 6).\*

The Judges, then, are the prominent persons in the book which bears their name. The grace of God was seen working on behalf of Israel also by means of both the prophets and the priests, though less prominently. For not less truly the grace of God is to be traced in the quiet labours of these men furthering the unity and progress of His people.

Of prophetic working we have examples in Deborah (see especially chap. 4. 4) ; in the prophet at chap. 6. 8-10, who came with a message of rebuke to his people, before Gideon was raised up to save them ; presumably also in a prophet bringing a similar message before Jephthah was raised up (chap. 10. 10-14). The only one of these who is named is Deborah, and she was also gifted as a sacred poetess, in which respect she prepared the way for Samuel's mother, Hannah (1 Sam. 2. 1-10).

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\* There are five chapters in the Book of Judges after the account of Samson's death, which ends chap. 16. But several considerations combine to show that these chapters form an appendix, the history of matters dating from a time when judges had not yet arisen in Israel. The reader who wishes to follow the chronological order may have some doubts how he is to proceed. But he can scarcely doubt that having read this appendix as an earlier part of the history, he ought to advance at once from the narrative of Samson's death to the beginning of the Book of Samuel, where he finds Eli filling the two offices of judge and high priest, for some unknown reason both having been placed in his hands.

For this reason Hannah also may be reckoned among those prophetic workers. Beyond all doubt the chapter in Samuel just quoted bears witness to the continuance of prophets in Israel (*vv.* 27-36); once more there is a man of God whose name has been withheld—the messenger of wrath to Eli's house.

In addition to those means of grace there was the tabernacle of Jehovah and the priestly office in the line of Aaron through the whole time of the judges. Aaron's son Eleazar had entered on his high-priestly office before the death of Moses, and had been expressly associated by Moses with Joshua in the task of arranging the tribes and apportioning the land of Canaan among them. Further, it may be said that a place was found for the tabernacle at Shiloh (*Josh.* 18. 1), where the priests of the house of Aaron exercised their functions, as the following chapters of the Book of Samuel testify. In the Book of Judges, however, very little is said of them. Probably the high priest directed the expeditions of the tribes against the Canaanites, by answers which he received from God (*chap.* 1. 2). This was certainly so when Eleazar's son Phinehas and the ark of God were with the tribes in the civil war with Benjamin (*chap.* 20. 18, 23, 26-28. See also the reference to, not a feast, but, as in the R.V. margin, "The feast of Jehovah from year to year in Shiloh," *chap.* 21. 19-21). It is the same state of matters with the priesthood and the tabernacle which appears in the many incidental notices in 1 Sam. 1-4. The tabernacle is at Shiloh; and all Israel, from Dan to Beer-sheba, come up to Shiloh, where the "solemn feasts" of Jehovah, that is, His *trysts*, are held year by year, and all is under the direction of the aged priest Eli, assisted by his two sons. There has never been put forward any reasonable ground for doubting that the arrangements made by Joshua and Eleazar had subsisted all this time. And if the influence of the priesthood

during the time of the Judges had been feeble, or if the personal character of the men had failed to command respect, as has been conjectured, this adds to the evidence of the strong hold of these institutions on the commonwealth of the Twelve Tribes.

And yet there are one or two particulars mentioned in these four chapters which suggest that, while essentially everything had been kept up as at the beginning, still there were those movements which are inseparable from the existence of real life, such as a true history records. There was, in short, a tendency towards certain minor additions or developments, all of which indicate increasing firmness in the institutions of worship, analogous to those which have been noted in the institutions of civil government. Thus—

*First.*—The only startling particular is a change in the high-priestly line. True, it continued within the limits of the house of Aaron, as the Law required; but it had passed from the family of his elder son Eleazar into that of his younger son Ithamar, from whom, however, it afterwards reverted to the family of Eleazar in the course of the reigns of David and Solomon. Absolutely nothing is known of the circumstances of this change, or of the reasons which led to it. Eleazar's line may have lain under some 'ceremonial defilement, or perhaps moral unfitness; or the change may have formed a part of one of those social or political convulsions to which the period of the Judges was exposed. The date of its occurrence being entirely unknown, it is vain to speculate as to whether Eli was the first high priest of his line, or whether he succeeded to his office by quiet inheritance. This much may be said, that his own sons were as unfit to be priests as any men can be imagined to have been; and yet, though men abhorred or contemned the offering of Jehovah in the hands of such priests as those were, and knew that a prophet had denounced

the judgments of Jehovah upon that vile priestly house, there is, nevertheless, no evidence of their hold upon their office being loosened or endangered among the people. When Eli is first mentioned, the historian can scarcely be said to introduce him to his readers : rather he makes a mere allusion to Eli, as to a man sufficiently well known. Even when we read chap. 1. 9, that "Eli the priest sat upon his seat by the door-post of the temple of Jehovah," no explanation is vouchsafed whether this seat was an honour which had come to be conferred upon the high-priest, or whether it belonged to Eli in virtue of his uniting the offices of high-priest and judge, or whether it was merely a becoming attention reverently paid to his extreme old age, since he died at the age of ninety-eight.

*Secondly.*—From a theological point of view there is one indication of advance, for it is in this chapter that the title is first used, "Jehovah of hosts" (chaps. 1. 3, 11; 4. 4; adopted in 2 Sam. 5. 10; 6. 2, 18; 7. 8, 26, 27). This marks a change ; for the title, of whose use we have no knowledge previously, from this time forward becomes very common. Except these instances in Samuel, just mentioned, it is rare in the historical books ; that is to say, in Chronicles only in three passages, parallel to three in Samuel, and never in Kings, except in the section which gives the history of Elijah and Elisha. On the other hand, Isaiah uses it at chaps. 37. 16, 32; 39. 5; whereas it is wanting in the parallel passages in Kings. It occurs very frequently in his book from first to last, and often in the other prophets, except Ezekiel, Daniel (whose book does not stand among the prophets in the Jewish Scriptures), Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah. As to the meaning of this title of God, for our present purpose it is unnecessary to determine whether the hosts are the earthly hosts of Israel or the heavenly hosts ; and if the latter, whether inanimate or animate—namely, the stars or the angels. It may be plausibly maintained that it was a title

which Israel had learned through their frequent experiences in the period of the Judges, the sudden and striking cases of the salvation of Jehovah granted to them by these judges whom He had raised up. The whole conception might indeed have sent its roots down as far back as to that mysterious appearance to Joshua, when his mind was engrossed with its thoughts about the taking of Jericho, when the man with the drawn sword standing over against him said, "Nay, but as captain of Jehovah's host am I now come" (Josh. 5. 13-15).

*Thirdly.*—There is a tendency towards a fixed and settled state of the house of Jehovah at Shiloh. In truth it was not much of a house in the modern sense of the word—it was a mere tent constructed by Moses in the wilderness, so as to stand in obvious relation to the tents of the children of Israel, which together formed their camp.\*

As explained in the footnote, this was the place of appointed meeting between Jehovah and His people, where they held tryst. In the later books the name "House of Jehovah" becomes very common; but it is found only thrice in the Pentateuch (Exod. 23. 19 and 34. 26; Deut. 23. 18 (*v.* 19 in Heb.)).† It also occurs thrice in these opening chapters of Samuel, as they give some account of the worship at Shiloh (chap. 1. 7, 24; 3. 15). There is the commencement of a transition from a simple tent to a fixed dwelling, that is, from curtains to a house

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\* Its name, which occurs with great frequency in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, is very unsuccessfully translated in the A.V. "tabernacle of the congregation"; it is much better in the R.V., "tent of meeting." But the Revisers shrank from using an old English word which has largely gone out of use, else they might have had a translation singularly happy on account of both its compactness and its precision, the *trysting tent*; and at the same time, by a piece of rare good fortune, they would have secured the word "tryst" to represent a Hebrew word which has perhaps occasioned more perplexity to translators than any other. They have followed the A.V. in the main, rendering it by "congregation," "synagogue," "time," "set time," "season," "due season," "appointed season," "assembly," "meeting," "solemn meeting," "time appointed," "appointed season," "feast," "set feast," "solemn feast," "solemn day," "solemnity."

† Compare, however, in the history of Jacob's vow, "the house of God," twice (Gen. 28. 17, 22).



in our sense of the word, as David puts it in 2 Sam. 7. 1-6; for mention is made of a doorpost beside which Eli sat upon his seat, and also little Samuel opened the doors of the house. And still more marked is the use for the first and second time in chaps. 1. 9 and 3. 3 of a Hebrew word which is habitually translated "temple," though also "palace." Nothing is known to us which warrants the conjecture that the tabernacle of meeting, or trysting tent, set up by Joshua at Shiloh did not continue there throughout the period of the Judges, and so on to Eli's time. A fixed and well-known place for the house of Jehovah is plainly suggested by the language of even that wandering Levite in Judg. 19. 18, and it is plain, from the narrative in Judg. 20. 26-28, that the ark had been removed to Beth-el attended by its keeper, the high-priest Phinehas, in order the better to wait upon the tribes as they had gone forth to the civil war with Benjamin.\*

There certainly had been in some sense a choice of Shiloh by Jehovah (see Psalm 78. 60); otherwise the whole congregation of Israel, with Joshua and Eleazar at their head, would scarcely have assembled there and set up the trysting tent with the ark. Yet, on the other hand, the prophetic books draw a broad distinction between the unsettledness of the position of the ark at Shiloh and the permanence of the settlement at Jerusalem, which city Jehovah chose to be His rest for ever.

However, even a tenant at will, or an occupant on sufferance, feels that every year he is permitted to stay still where he is, is something in his favour, and he comes to hope, or even to expect, that he will not be disturbed; and so it would seem that doors and doorposts came to be added.

Besides, there are two expressions which deserve to be noticed in this connexion. The first occurs in the message of

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\* This fact is somewhat obscured in the rendering of the A.V. in chap. 20, 18, 26; the true rendering is "Beth-el," as in the R.V., not "house of God."

the unnamed prophet to Eli (chap. 2. 29 and 32), when the house of God is named by him "my habitation," a term which Moses had applied to God's habitation in heaven (Deut. 26. 15), as there are besides one or two instances of the use of it in the Psalms. Solomon also has similar expressions in his dedication services (1 Kings 8. 13), "I have surely built thee a house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever," not indeed using this word, yet others which show how familiar the idea was to Israelites in the early part of his reign.\*

Passing from this exquisitely beautiful and appropriate term for the habitation of Jehovah, which the Twelve Tribes were beginning to hope might be permanently fixed at Shiloh, there is a verb deserving of attention used by the widow of Phinehas, Eli's son, as she expired in shame and sorrow (chap. 4. 21, 22): "The glory is departed from Israel, for the ark of God is taken." Literally it is, "The glory is gone into exile from Israel." To her and to all true Israelites the glory

\* Dr. Driver, in his notes on the Hebrew text of Samuel, remarks on v. 29, that the word, "except in the late passage 2 Chron. 36. 15, hardly occurs in prose." Suppose this to be so, it must be by excluding the use of it in Deut. 26. 15; Jer. 25. 30; and Zech. 2. 13 (in the Hebrew, 17), all used of the habitation of Jehovah. Or if it be alleged that these prophetic passages are not prose, but poetry, may not the same be alleged of this prophecy? He also rejects the locative sense "*in* my habitation," and says it must be "*to* my habitation." He admits "exceptions to what has been said may be found in M.T. (that is, the Massoretic text), but they are very rare." In the meantime, one may seek shelter from the critics very comfortably under these exceptions; not forgetting, however, that the translation which he pronounces necessary, "which I have commanded to my habitation," yields a very good sense. For both these reasons it seems a pity that he should have committed himself to the opinion that the word for habitation here "does not admit of being construed in accordance with the ordinary rules of Hebrew syntax." Many regret the readiness with which the critics indulge in conjectural emendations of the text; but when the suspected word occurs a second time within four verses, and Dr. Driver can only say "Another corrupt passage," though he has been unable to suggest a plausible emendation either time, this regret becomes the greater. Besides, it must be remembered that the feminine form of the noun is used of the dwelling place of Jehovah (Ps. 76. 2), and of Jehovah Himself as the dwelling-place of His people (Deut. 33. 27). See the word also at Zeph. 3. 7. If these passages from the prophets are set aside as being poetry and not prose, I ask why, on the same principle, should not also the prophet's message to Eli be described as poetry?

and the ark were inseparable. This was not a mere movement of the ark from one spot to another, where the holy tent might be pitched anew. No! The ark lost its habitation at Shiloh, and it went into exile and became a homeless outcast. This was a fact, sad and perplexing, which Samuel well understood and felt deeply, as was proved by his conduct when he came to act as head of the people.

There is clear evidence of the hold which the worship at Shiloh had on the entire people of Israel. The period of the Judges, therefore, is not to be reckoned as simply a period of disintegration, though no doubt there were influences working strongly in this direction. If it had been, there could not have subsisted that strong sense of unity which is expressed, not only throughout the frightful civil war waged against Benjamin by the other tribes somewhere towards the beginning of this period, but also in the descriptions of the state of matters in the time of Eli's old age, certainly not a time in which such enthusiasm could have been generated. In spite of the grossly ungodly and immoral conduct of Eli's sons, "All Israel" came regularly to worship at the sanctuary in Shiloh (1 Sam. 2. 14, 22-24, 28, 29); and "All this people" are there described as "the people of Jehovah." And Samuel was recognised by all Israel as established to be a prophet, and his word came to all Israel (3. 20; 4. 1). Other examples, at a later period in Samuel's life, may be found in chaps. 7. 2, 3, 5; 8. 4; 9. 20; 10. 17-20; 11. 12-15. There is one phrase which imparts emphasis to what the careful reader observes of the completeness and unity of the people described as "All Israel," when the additional words come in, "from Dan even to Beer-sheba." Beer-sheba was on the edge of the great southern wilderness, as one went towards Egypt; it had been probably the favourite residence of the patriarchs with their flocks and herds. Dan, on the other hand, was in the extreme north, a town captured by the

boldness and valour of the tribe of Dan, and named anew after their father ; the record of the exploit is preserved in Judg. 18. The phrase " All Israel, from Dan even to Beer-sheba," is found in the narrative of the great civil war (Judg. 20. 1) ; and it reappears in this description of the universal acknowledgment of Samuel's right to be received as the appointed prophet of Jehovah to the entire people (chap. 3. 20). In the history of Samuel's pupil, King David, under whom Israel became thoroughly welded together into a strong nation, the phrase occurs four times (2 Sam. 3. 10; 17. 11; 24. 2, 15) ; also once in the earlier part of Solomon's reign (1 Kings 4. 25 (5. 5 in Heb.)). Afterwards it never occurs, probably on account of the people losing their unity by being torn asunder and formed into two rival kingdoms. Yet there is one notable exception in 2 Chron. 30. 5, describing the invitation sent out by Hezekiah and his princes, so that the Twelve Tribes might reunite themselves at the Passover. Perhaps one might infer that in the meantime the phrase had passed almost entirely into disuse ; since here and in 1 Chron. 21. 2 (the equivalent of 2 Sam. 24. 2), the writer, in a confessedly late age, has inverted the order of words in the expression, and begins with the kingdom of Judah, writing, " from Beer-sheba even unto Dan."

And it must not be forgotten that the naming of these two extreme points in the land of Israel is the more remarkable when they are used to bring out the unity of all Israel ; because in themselves Dan and Beer-sheba had become more or less centres of disunion. So far as Dan is concerned, this is stated very strongly in Judg. 18. 30, 31. Micah's graven image had been set up there, and its ministers " became priests to the tribe of Dan," all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh. Dan and Beer-sheba are brought together in Amos 8. 14, in such a way as to show that the prophet regarded them as outstanding sources of mischief to true religion. It is to be

feared that these places were not the only sources of such mischief, since even such an admirable judge as Gideon ensnared his own family and all Israel by the ephod which he put in his city Ophrah (Judg. 8. 27). Yet in spite of all these temptations, "All Israel, from Dan even to Beer-sheba," came up to worship at Shiloh, and knew and acknowledged Samuel's claims.

Such a hopeful religious condition would have been impossible in Israel had there not been a great deal of spiritual good accomplished in the days of the Judges. Probably the evil that was done is brought out vividly, so as to impress the reader with the need for the successive judges whom Jehovah raised up to save Israel. And, since they did save Israel, this may be held to imply that the long periods of rest, more or less directly under the guardianship of these judges, were times of revival and spiritual refreshment, whose character might be analogous to the time under Samuel which is described in 1 Sam. 7. Such an opinion will be confirmed by a careful study of this singular Book of Judges. It is not necessary to enter on a discussion of various curious questions which it suggests to the reader. But, on the face of the narrative, it is obvious that it brings into view four crises, when the spirit of Jehovah came upon, or as it is sometimes expressed, clothed himself with, certain men whom Jehovah raised up to save Israel; namely, Othniel, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson (Judg. 3. 10; 6. 34; 11. 29; 13. 25; 14. 6, 19; 15. 14). Nor does it seem possible to avoid connecting this manifestation of the Spirit of Jehovah with corresponding previous manifestations of the Angel of Jehovah, who had often appeared to the patriarchs, and to Moses at the burning bush, and apparently to Joshua at Jericho under a slightly modified name, "the captain of Jehovah's host;" whom the Church generally has recognised as no other than her Saviour in His pre-existent state, who has also been described

by a prophet in a pathetic passage (Isai. 63. 9) as the "Angel of Jehovah's presence." Three appearances of this Angel are plain enough in the Book of Judges: chap. 2. 1 (notwithstanding some difficulties which may be noticed later on), before Othniel was raised up; chap. 6. 12, to Gideon; chap. 13. 3-21, to Samson's parents. The fourth case has no explicit statement, yet analogy gives probability to it—chap. 10. 11, Jehovah rebuking the people before Jephthah became judge.

It is a tempting subject for speculation, what is meant by the appearing in 1 Sam. 3. 21, "Jehovah appeared again in Shiloh: for Jehovah revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of Jehovah." Besides those appearances of Jehovah to the patriarchs, to Moses, and to Joshua, it is repeatedly written that Jehovah appeared to Moses at the tent of meeting, especially on occasions of disorder or of positive rebellion, when the glory of Jehovah appeared to Moses and to the whole people; and so in those appearances to Gideon and to the parents of Samson. But in connexion with this revelation of Himself to Samuel in Shiloh, what are we to understand by this appearing of Jehovah again in Shiloh? We read in Psalm 102. 16, "For Jehovah hath built up Zion; he hath appeared in His glory." Is this appearing, and that to Samuel, to be understood as purely spiritual? Does it not rather look as if the glories of the trysting tent in the wilderness were being restored, as if some manifestation were being made like that at the consecration of Aaron to the priesthood (Lev. 9. 4, 6, 23)? If so, when had this glory ceased to be seen in Shiloh, so that it should be said, "Jehovah appeared *again* in Shiloh"? It is not easy to suggest an occasion for such withdrawal, unless it be found in the somewhat mysterious narrative given in Judg. 2. 1-5: "The Angel of Jehovah came up from Gilgal to Bochim," a word which means "weeping persons." In Mic. 6. 5 the prophet calls the people (R.V.) to remember "from Shittim

unto Gilgal, that ye may know the righteous acts of Jehovah." The people were to remember His dealings amid Balak's contrivances with Balaam, and their own movements from the crossing of the Jordan near Shittim until their first encampment on the soil of Canaan had been made at Gilgal, where they renewed their public religious profession by resuming the practice of the rite of circumcision and observing the Passover. It was then and there that Jehovah manifested Himself to Joshua, as he meditated how Jericho might be taken, and how the successful campaigns might be inaugurated which should give Israel possession of the Promised Land. Where no particulars are given, the reader is left to conceive how it took place. Perhaps Jehovah manifested His presence on this occasion, and came up leading them from Gilgal to Shiloh, and remained there until He strikingly withdrew His manifested presence, after administering that stern rebuke on account of their unfaithfulness when they suffered the Canaanites to remain among them. See more on this subject in Note B at the end of this volume.

The record in the first chapter of the Book of Judges favours the supposition that there were two parties, with two policies, among the Twelve Tribes. The one was more uncompromising in upholding the teaching of Moses and the example of Joshua in dealing with the Canaanites; a party in which Judah took the lead, followed more or less by Simeon and Benjamin. The other party reached the most aggravated degree of guilty laxity in the tribes of Asher and Naphtali, and its most humiliating form in the tribe of Dan, with a policy for which the great house of Joseph, namely, the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, had been to some considerable extent responsible. If this was so, the event recorded in chap. 2. 1-5, indicates that they had settled down upon these worldly ways of little faith; so that Jehovah said that consequently He would no longer be with them to drive out the Canaanites

(see *vv.* 20-23). This had been the threat of the Angel (*v.* 3), which had led to a temporary repentance, and had given the name "The Weepers" to the place where he had met and rebuked them. For Bochim is a name unknown either before or after, notwithstanding some critical conjectures on Mic. 1. 10. One is left, then, to wonder where it was. And no supposition makes less demand on the imagination, or fits in so simply with the case so far as known, as that it was some spot at Shiloh where the tribes were accustomed to meet for stated worship, and for the consultations which were inseparable from the gathering of all the males in Israel before Jehovah. If so, the event occurred at one of the three great annual feasts, or assemblies, or trysts (compare Judg. 21. 19). The policy for which the people were rebuked was the great cause of disintegration, to whatever extent this existed in Israel during the period of the Judges.

The sins and sufferings of the people which are repeatedly detailed in that book are not therefore to be reckoned the substance of their history, probably not even the most important part of it. Rather this is to be looked for in the long intervening times of rest or quiet, of which it is recorded that the land enjoyed them, perhaps ordinarily for about forty years, though one is mentioned which lasted twice as long (chap. 3. 30). A charming and instructive picture of the better side, in one of these blessed seasons of recovery and repose, is presented in the Book of Ruth. The period of the Judges had been a time of struggle, socially, morally, and religiously, between good and bad powers and principles in Israel. From the information within our reach it may be impossible to determine whether declension or recovery had predominated. In any case the people had reached a stage of manly maturity, in comparison with which their condition under Joshua had been more like the age of boyhood. And as the student passes from the Book



of Judges to the Book of Samuel, he observes these matured powers in full activity. The death of Samson had been very tragic ; indeed, his whole life was a tragedy. He is the only individual expressly named a Nazirite\* from his birth, by the call of God addressed to his parents : though Samuel's dedication is very similar, with the difference that it was a freewill offering from his mother (1 Sam. 1. 11). Samson may justly be regarded as a type of his people Israel ; he had been consecrated to the service of Jehovah, and he had been made miraculously strong that he might do his Lord's work. Yet there is no hint of his being a giant, like the heroes of certain mythical tales of many nations. There was no physical basis for his strength, though it was connected with his unshorn locks, the badge of the Nazirite : his strength was due exclusively to a spiritual cause—his dedication to Jehovah and his trust in Him. But Samson was like Israel : he over and over again forgot his high calling, and proved to be grossly unworthy of it, and brought himself into difficulties and disgrace, of which he never ought to have had experience. The information given does not enable us to determine whether or not Samson and Eli were contemporaries. Some good authorities reckon that the chronology favours the belief that they were contemporaries ; others think it more probable that Eli was summoned to fill the highest office in the commonwealth in order to save Israel from the confusion and anarchy to which Samson's death exposed them. But this must remain undetermined.

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\* So the word ought to be spelt, as in the R.V.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH OF SAMUEL.

THE people of Israel had been under the Law which Jehovah gave to Moses ; they had also occasionally enjoyed the ministry of prophets in the times of the judges. Notwithstanding this, it might well be said, "The word of Jehovah was precious (or, rare) in those days : there was no open vision " (1 Sam. 3. 1). We may find a commentary on this in chap. 28. 6, 15, obtained from the closing days of Saul's reign : "And when Saul inquired of Jehovah, Jehovah answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets." Besides, there were cases of sad defection from Israel's right position before God ; especially if the imbecility of the aged high priest Eli and the gross evil life and the daring ungodliness of his sons became the more alarming by the idolatrous schism at Dan, over which a representative of the family of Moses presided. In these circumstances what was needed for a revival of the cause of God in Israel, beginning as usual at His own house, was an eminently holy, wise, and capable man, such as Samuel is here portrayed. This would be all the more effective if the personal character were strengthened by the ecclesiastical standing, and by the family religion, of this instrument whom Jehovah raised up. We learn from the genealogies in 1 Chron. 6. 22-28 and 33-38 that Samuel was a Levite, descended from Kohath, the firstborn of Levi, and that his grandson, Heman, became one of David's three chiefs or leaders in the singing at the house of God. On this subject see also 1 Chron. 15. 17 ; 16. 41, 42. Samuel himself gave a

prominent place to music in the training of his prophets, and the song of his mother Hannah favours the belief that he was familiar with sacred song from his childhood. Nor should it be overlooked in this connexion that a prominent member of his Levitical house (that of Kohath), namely Korah, had left a melancholy memory in Israel, as he perished in his attempt to usurp the priesthood ; and yet that his sons, who did not perish along with their father (Num. 16. 34 ; 26. 11), must have sooner or later retrieved the honour of their house. For the sons of Korah are prominent in the titles of the Psalms and in the musical arrangements of David for the sanctuary.

There is one thing more to be observed. Samuel was the true Nazirite, if the consecration under this peculiar vow was the embodiment or representation of the service rendered to Jehovah by His people, who were " a kingdom of priests, a holy nation " (Exod. 19. 6). Already there had been one remarkable Nazirite, Samson, given to Jehovah before his birth, and bound by his vow for his whole lifetime, and he was to " begin to save Israel out of the hands of the Philistines " (Judg. 13. 2-7). But Samson had failed shamefully, and his breach of his special Nazirite vow had been connected with gross violations of that moral law by which all men are bound. There was to be a glorious contrast between Samson and Samuel, this only other Nazirite for life named in the Old Testament (1 Sam. 1. 11) ; and the verses which precede and follow tell how his tried and saintly mother made a voluntary dedication of him, praying in faith and in bitterness of soul, and continuing to do so. The impurity of Samson's life was repeated, and more grossly and with specially offensive defiance of God, by the priests in the sanctuary, the aged high priest's sons and representatives, who corrupted the very women who had been set apart, apparently for life service, at the entrance of the trysting tent (chap. 2. 22 ; compare Exod. 38. 8). It would be for Samuel to show himself

the counterpart of what these consecrated women ought to have been, as he ministered before Eli the priest, girded with a linen ephod (chap. 2. 11, 18).

Eli took notice of the actions of Hannah, and misinterpreted these as if they had been the actions of a drunkard,\* and faithfully rebuked her. This rebuke only brought out the godly woman's meek remonstrance and explanation. Hearing this, the high priest entirely altered his estimate of her, and said, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant thy petition that thou hast asked of Him." These words she thankfully accepted as a promise from God. And so, when the object of her vows had been given to her, during the time in which she nursed the child (for two years, perhaps even more, if we may judge from present practice in that country) she remained at home; but when she had weaned him she took him up with her, accompanying her husband and the family, and brought him to Shiloh, to the house of Jehovah. Then she brought the child to the aged high priest, and recalled to his memory the circumstances in which he had promised to her that her vow should be granted, and unfolded to him its particulars, of which he may have been entirely ignorant, and fulfilled the engagements under which it brought her. And then and there the young child began to worship Jehovah.†

The meaning of the name Samuel has been much discussed. (1) The explanation in the margin of the A.V.,

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\* "Eli thought she had been drunken" is an inadequate rendering. The Hebrew term expresses habitual character.

† At the birth of her son (v. 20) "she called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of Jehovah." And again (v. 27, 28), "For this child I prayed, and Jehovah hath given me my petition which I asked of Him: therefore I also, I have granted him to Jehovah; as long as he liveth, he is granted to Jehovah." There has been some difficulty felt in translating the Hebrew verb. In itself it is simple enough. V. 20, rendered as exactly as possible, ends thus, "From Jehovah I have asked him." V. 27 substantially repeats this to Eli, yet with more fulness of detail. Then in v. 28 she adds, "And I also, I have caused him to be asked for Jehovah; all the days that he has lived he hath been asked for Jehovah," though only now actually brought to His house and placed in the hands of His priest.

“asked of God,” which was proposed by the Rabbi Kimchi, is not now accepted by many. (2) Strong opposition is also offered to another, which, however, is more popular, “Heard by God”; compare the name Ishmael, “God will hear.” No doubt there is a difficulty in the etymology: the rough Hebrew guttural, which has been retained in the spelling of Ishmael, has no place in the spelling of Samuel. Yet so distinguished a Hebraist as Ewald saw no insuperable difficulty in the elision; he appealed to the parallel in Zerubbabel. Dr. Driver, indeed, on the passage says that “numerous as are the proper names compounded of one of the sacred names and a verb, *there are none, or next to none, compounded with a passive participle.* Obvious as such a form as *blessed* or *helped* or *redeemed of Yah* might appear to be, it was uniformly discarded by the Hebrews. In proper names the passive participle is used only by itself.” Yet to avoid contradiction to his rule from the example Mehujael, “smitten of God,” he inclines to the Septuagint reading, in which the other strong Hebrew guttural is elided. Nor need it be unnatural to think that Hannah meant by giving this name to her son to emphasize the unusual addition of the divine name to the participle, as she explained, “Because of Jehovah I have asked him”; to Jehovah directly she had made her bold request, embodying her remarkable vow, and from Him the answer came, confirmed by His high priest. Besides, Dr. Driver perhaps admits there are exceptions, when he writes, “none, or next to none”; and the children of Israel may well have felt such reverence for this unique servant of Jehovah (always excepting Moses) as to leave his name unimitated even in its form. Let it be added to these considerations that there are proper names whose second member is a divine name, in which the first member may very well be taken to be a past participle. Such are Shebuel (the alternative form being Shubael, with the same meaning),

Pethuel, Kemuel, Nemuel, Geuel, perhaps Lemuel ; also some with the vowels *u* and *i* interchanged, that is, the passive participle and the allied verbal adjective, Jedidiah, Jediel, Neiel, Adiel, Aziel ; also there is Moriah, if the common etymology is accepted, "provided by Jah." (3) There is still an explanation, which has found favour since Gesenius proposed it, "The name of God," to which there are several parallels. This offers quite a satisfactory meaning : on this supposition Hannah named him "The name of God," because it was of Jehovah that she had asked him.

Unquestionably etymology is a difficult study, and there is considerable obscurity about those old Hebrew names and the interpretation of them. Probably the problem is not solved without taking into account a tendency toward what may be called a play upon words, to which the Israelites do not seem to have objected even in instances which we might think too sacred. The name *Joseph* indicated his mother's confidence that Jehovah would add to her another son ; yet the name admitted also of an allusion to God's taking away her reproach (Gen. 30. 23, 24). *Babel* may have meant "The gate of God" in the thought of the arrogant builders ; and yet the believers in the true God may have accepted the name, imposing on it the meaning "confusion," when Jehovah had confounded the builders (Gen. 11. 9). *Shiloh*, with its promise of peace, when the gathering (or obedience) of the peoples to Him should be an accomplished fact (Gen. 49. 10), admitted of the application in Ezek. 21. 27, till He come whose right it is. *On*, the name of a prominent Egyptian idolatrous city, was turned by a Hebrew pronunciation into *Aven*, that is, "vanity," or "iniquity" ; as the prophets connected Beth-el and Beth-Aven, "The house of God" and "The house of vanity." In Dan. 5. 25, 28, there is the use of the word *peres* and its plural, to express *division*, and also to hint at the *Persians*. And

*Isaac*, "he shall laugh," came to have several applications according to the nature of the laughter—the father's, the mother's, or the bondmaid's son's, as one or other of these was thought of at the moment. If we accept a reference to both of the examinations of Samuel's name, "Heard by God" and "The name of God," we may come nearest to the idea which his godly mother desired to impress on herself, and him, and all who used the name. A similar double explanation has been given of the name of his fellow Nazirite for life, Samson, "The sun," or "Strong," and thus "Doing service."

It is manifest that among Israel, under the Old Testament, even in a position less advanced than that of the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, women held a position which only the religion of the true God has demanded for them and secured to them. Hannah, the mother of Samuel, was a chosen vessel for the service of Jehovah. And other women are named as instruments, like her, for the preparation of servants for His use—sometimes their own children, sometimes persons connected with them less intimately. The reader of the Bible will remember Jochebed and Miriam, the mother and the sister of Moses; Deborah, who trained Barak to be one of the judges, her palm tree between Ramah and Beth-el, in the hill country of Ephraim, being in the near neighbourhood of Samuel's place of birth and upbringing; Huldah the prophetess to the godly king Josiah; and Lois and Eunice, the grandmother and mother of Timothy. In a similar position Elisabeth, the mother of the Baptist, is to be placed; and speaking with great reverence of her whom all generations are to count blessed, the mother of our Lord himself. It is instructive to observe these—Miriam, and Deborah, and Hannah, and Elisabeth, and the Blessed Virgin—how they had every one to do with sacred poetry or song; no doubt they made use of this influence in the training of those committed to their care. The power

of sacred music was felt by Samuel, and used by him, and he handed this on to David.

Hannah and her son had some hereditary rights in the religious movement in which they were to take a leading part. They belonged to one of the families of the tribe of Levi, whose genealogies have been carefully preserved in 1 Chron. 6; compare the shorter genealogies in 1 Sam. 1. 1; 14. 3. Samuel's fathers' house was in the line of succession to Kohath, the most distinguished of the great Levitical families; yet its fortunes may have suffered an eclipse through the sin of its ancestor Korah in the wilderness. Perhaps the family of Moses suffered in like manner, from the time that one of them became the priest of the high place of the tribe of Dan, if we follow the reading now generally adopted in Judg. 18. 30. Nothing has been left on record of the cause of the transference of the high priesthood from the family of Eleazar to that of Ithamar; it may have been spiritual declension among them also. If this was the case, the recovery and restoration to the high-priesthood in the person of Zadok might be compared with the recovery of a high position by the sons of Korah, when Samuel's son Heman took his place with his family as one of David's three principal singers for the Temple: they, no doubt, are "the sons of Korah" who are often named in the titles to the Psalms.

In the genealogy of Samuel, with which the Book of Samuel opens, the remotest name is that of "Zuph, an Ephrathite," in the A.V., but in the R.V., "an Ephraimite." Either translation is quite justifiable: as in the same book (chap. 17. 12) David is called "the son of that Ephrathite of Beth-lehem-Judah, whose name was Jesse." At present the popular translation is "Ephraimite." If it be so, the question is asked, Is it possible that Samuel could be a Levite? There is no reason why he should not. We might then speak of Samuel as



an Ephraimite Levite, as we speak of an English or French or Dutch or German or Russian Jew ; for the one description refers to his origin, or blood or race ; the other to the land with which he is geographically connected by domicile or political relations. Thus in 1 Chron. 2. 21-24, we read of the marriage of Hezron, an important man in the tribe of Judah, with a daughter of Machir, the father of Gilead, and of his issue, occupying a distinguished place among the families of Manasseh. And in Judg. 17. 7 it is written : " There was a young man, out of Beth-lehem-Judah, of the family of Judah, who was a Levite, and he sojourned there." No doubt Dr. Driver says, as he comments on this verse, " The discrepancy is hard to reconcile." His readers must judge of this for themselves, even in view of the argument by which he enforces his opinion, that in " Judg. 17. 7 the expression ' of the family of Judah, ' applied to a Levite, shows that Levites settled in a particular tribe may have been reckoned as belonging to it (cf. Ew. *Hist.* ii. 421) ; but there the addition *וְהָיָא לִי* makes the double relationship clear ; here the addition *אֶפְרַתִּי* seems to show that the narrator has no consciousness of Samuel's Levitical descent. The explanation that the term designates Elqanah \* as an Ephraimite, merely so far as his civil rights and standing were concerned, makes it express nothing more than what is virtually declared in *v.* 2, and moreover implies a limitation which is not at least sustained by usage. It is a question whether the traditions embodied in Chronicles have been handed down uniformly in their original form, and whether in some cases the genealogies have not been artificially completed. The supposition that Samuel was really of Ephraimite descent, and was only in later times reckoned as a Levite, appears to be the simplest explanation of the divergence."

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\* So Dr. Driver spells it on account of the peculiar Hebrew letter.

In dealing with this style of argument may not one retort that in Judg. 17. 7 the fact of Levitical descent is made prominent, so far as this is so, because much of the point of the narrative depends upon this; whereas in Samuel's case, Levitical descent is interesting, but is in no sense essential. Again, Dr. Driver seems to think that to say Samuel was civilly an Ephraimite is uselessly to repeat what has been said, that he was from Mount Ephraim. But in this contention there is surely some mistake. Mount Ephraim is not restricted to the tribe of Ephraim, either geographically or politically. Thus, in Judg. 4. 5, "Deborah dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah, between Ramah and Beth-el in Mount Ephraim," which seems identical with the Benjamite country in which Samuel was born. And in 2 Sam. 20. 21, "A man of Mount Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri," is described in *v.* 1 of the same chapter as "Sheba the son of Bichri, a Benjamite." In Josh. 17. 15, Mount Ephraim includes the territory of two tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh. And often we are unable to connect Mount Ephraim specially with the tribe of Ephraim; it may or may not have been so; thus, Judg. 3. 27; 7. 24; 10. 1; 17. 1, 8, etc.; 19. 1, 16, 18; 1 Sam. 9. 4; 14. 22. Finally, perhaps it may be hoped that few will agree with Dr. Driver's suggestion about the unreliable or even fictitious character of the testimony in the Book of Chronicles, however guarded and gentle may be the language which he employs to express this idea.

It is surely true that during the period of the Judges, while the ark and its tabernacle were at Shiloh, within the tribe of Ephraim, this was the most important tribe in Israel, both civilly and ecclesiastically; of this there is evidence in the language running through Psalm 78. And all the Levites resident within this tribe may have been proud to describe themselves as Ephraimites; not to say, that individual families

among them may have acquired special civil privileges, the possession of which was proclaimed to the world by the use of this designation. Some such attraction to Ephraim, and deference to it, would explain how the *Benjamite* Shimei pressed David to pardon him on the ground that he was "the first of all the house of *Joseph* to go down to meet my lord the king," on his return after Absalom's rebellion had been quelled (2 Sam. 19. 20).

On looking to the list of Levitical cities within the tribe of Ephraim (Josh. 21. 20-22), they are seen to be four, namely, Shechem, Gezer, Kibzaim, and Beth-horon, not one of which is named in this book in connexion with Samuel's family. Indeed, none of them is named in either of the Books of Samuel, except Beth-horon, in 1 Sam. 13. 18, and Gezer, in 2 Sam. 5. 25 ; and the bearing of either of these verses on the history of Samuel is, to say the least, exceedingly remote. From this and other glimpses into the distant past, there is reason to suspect that some of the cities assigned to the Levites never came into their possession, through the carelessness or cowardice or covetousness of the tribes. In that case the Levites would be left to make such arrangements for themselves as they could. Judg. 19. 1 may record a case of this nature. It is known that one of these four cities, Gezer, remained in the hands of the Canaanites till that king of Egypt whose daughter Solomon married took it and burned it, and gave it for a present to his daughter, when Solomon rebuilt it (1 Kings 9. 15-17). Since Beth-horon the nether is there named along with Gezer, one might even suppose that it shared the fortunes of Gezer ; if so, the Levites in Ephraim were long left without getting possession of two out of the four cities which were rightfully theirs, and this would unavoidably lead to irregularities in the arrangements for settling them within Ephraimite territory. Now, since Mount Ephraim,

or, in the R.V., the hill country of Ephraim, included some part of the tribe of Benjamin's territory ; and since Benjamin was the smallest of the tribes, and the weakest, at all events after it had been almost ruined in the great civil war, there is something attractive in the conjecture that the numerous and powerful tribe of Ephraim quartered a portion of their Levites upon the feeble tribe of Benjamin : though Jeroboam's revolution might well blot out the recollection of a state of things which had ceased to be of interest and practical importance on account of his far-reaching changes.

In Samuel's childhood there must have been much which was most favourable to him spiritually, all things having been arranged for him by God's gracious care, so as to fit him for the unique position which he was to occupy in Israel. But alongside of these there were also most unfavourable circumstances in his surroundings. The Law of Moses tolerated polygamy, though, with our Lord's instructions before us, we must guard against thinking that such defects in the Hebrew marriage law had the divine approval. We may hope that it was only the worldly rank and power to which saints like Gideon and David attained that tempted them to multiply wives as they did, but that godly men in quieter conditions of life were generally free from this stain. Yet Elkanah's bigamy proves that all good men were not preserved entirely from the snare. Elkanah's sin in this respect could not be for the good of Samuel. To speak of nothing else, the other wife and her children may have had little sympathy with Hannah's spiritual-mindedness. If such unfavourable circumstances existed, they would offer a sufficient motive to Hannah for watching over her boy with closest attention, till she weaned him and took him up to Shiloh, that he might appear before Jehovah and abide there for ever. Nay, even the house of Jehovah had its dangers. What would have been more natural than that she

should have entrusted her little boy, whom she must leave behind, to the care of the women who did service at the door of the tabernacle (see chap. 2. 22). But the vile conduct of the sons of Eli had deteriorated or ruined the character of even these consecrated women, whatever care Hannah might take to select a guardian for him.

Though there were circumstances in the arrangements of Elkanah's household that were not favourable to spirituality, yet there is no reason to doubt that it was a home known for its decided religious profession and its real godliness, chosen and fitted by the grace of God for the upbringing of one who was to be, next to Moses, the most eminent servant of Jehovah in the Jewish Church. "This man went up out of his city from year to year to worship and to sacrifice unto Jehovah of hosts in Shiloh" (1 Sam. 1. 3). This going up was thoroughly familiar to every pious Israelite; compare Deut. 33. 19; Psalm 122. 1, 4. The house mentioned in this and other psalms may be the Temple; yet it may equally be the tabernacle of Moses, to which this name is applied in Exod. 23. 19 and 34. 26, passages which are admitted by critical writers to be ancient. It has been already noticed that this tabernacle, set up by Joshua at Shiloh, and remaining there undisturbed, may have undergone certain minor modifications which indicated an expectation that it was to remain there permanently: see Jer. 7. 12. Such were its doors and doorposts; and corresponding to this was the new name applied to it, in Hebrew, *heycal*, a temple or other spacious building, fitting it for describing alike Solomon's Temple and the palace of a king. And so we have seen that the tent at Shiloh was also called "the habitation."

The Hebrew verb is notoriously poor in tenses; yet there is a very skilful use of such forms as exist, so as to express various shades of meaning, even in the matter of

time. In the opening chapters of the Book of Samuel frequent use is made of a form which expresses repetition and habit. Thus *v.* 3 might be translated, "This man used to go up"; it was his habit to do so. This meaning admirably suits the narrative in that verse: it was not that he went up once, on some isolated occasion, nor even that he did so occasionally and irregularly; but he went up from year to year. Nor was it merely his practice as an individual: we infer his family religion from what is said in *v.* 21: "And the man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer unto Jehovah the yearly sacrifice and his vow." Agreeably to this there is mention of the little robe, or mantle, which Hannah made for Samuel, and she "brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice" (*chap.* 2. 19). The practice of Joseph and the Blessed Virgin was the same, an annual visit (*Luke* 2. 41, 42). "His parents went every year to Jerusalem at the Feast of the Passover. And when He was twelve years old they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast." The rule for the males in Israel was to appear before Jehovah three times in the year (*Exod.* 23. 17, etc.). But for the females the Law of God laid down no rule, nor any for the age at which the boys were to be reckoned among the males on whom the fulfilment of this duty was incumbent; yet the recorded example of Joseph and Mary, along with indications outside of Scripture, makes it probable that twelve was the age usually accepted among the godly families. And the uniformity of custom in Elkanah's and Joseph's families points to a corresponding practice among the females, that of going up once a year out of the three times, the Passover naturally being the feast preferred for this visit. These were times of blessing to Hannah herself, however trying she might find some of the circumstances on account of her husband's bigamy, as

appears from *v.* 3 and onwards, in respect of the portion which Elkanah gave her from his annual sacrifice, different from what he gave to his other wife and her sons and daughters.\* All through these proceedings her rival used to provoke her sore, for to make her fret (literally, to make her storm), and with considerable success. While all this is expressed in Hebrew by the tense which implies that these events were habitual, the verbs at the beginning of *vv.* 4 and 8 are in the ordinary tense of narration, so that all between may be regarded as a parenthesis, thus: "and the day came that Elkanah sacrificed (now he used to give to Peninnah, his wife, . . . therefore she wept and used not to eat), and Elkanah her husband said unto her, Hannah, why weepest thou?" etc.

This particular Passover was a critical day in her history (*vv.* 9-11); for all through the holy feast this day in Shiloh, at which they ate and drank together as a family, the aged high priest sitting all the time and observing the worship, she was in the bitterness of her soul, and she prayed unto Jehovah, and she kept weeping. Then it was that she took the advantage which the law in Num. 30 gave her, and made a special vow to Jehovah, like Jacob at Beth-el, only she offered more than Jacob proposed to give, in the event of being heard and remembered. She had come to see that her personal affliction was only a part of the affliction which at the time bowed down all the true people of God, for the House of God itself was one of the chief seats of the evil

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\* There is difficulty here in translating the Hebrew text. The A.V. is "a worthy portion, for he loved Hannah"; in the margin, "a double portion," which is the translation in the R.V. In its margin, however, there is a very peculiar reading which is adopted from the Septuagint by some eminent students, among others Dr. Driver, "a single portion because she had no child, howbeit Elkanah loved," etc. This makes no alteration in the strain of the narrative. Plainly it has difficulties of its own, which need not now be discussed.

and burden. She remembered, doubtless, how Samson had been dedicated to Jehovah as a Nazirite before he was born, yet with no higher mission than only to begin to save Israel out of the hands of the Philistines. She felt a holy impulse to do something which should be far more important than outward deliverances for her nation, or relief to herself individually. If Jehovah would look on her affliction (she goes back on His own gracious language to Moses at the burning bush, *Exod. 3. 7*), and would give her a man child, then she would give him to Jehovah to be a Nazirite for life. Her earnestness and urgency are made prominent in *v. 12*: she continued to pray, she prayed over and over again (in the Hebrew, multiplied to pray) before Jehovah. And it used to come to pass, that is, it happened repeatedly on this eventful day, that while she did this, Eli marked her mouth. And since the lips kept moving, while no sound was heard to issue from her mouth, Eli drew the inference that she was a drunkard. Alas! he was familiar with gross vice within the precincts of the house of God, and within the circle of his own consecrated family.\* The rebuke which, on this mistaken assumption, his holy soul addressed to her drew from her a keen repudiation of the charge, and an explanation of the abundance of her complaint and provocation which had led her to multiply her prayers. Eli now understood that this repeated vehement pleading with Jehovah was no vain repetition, far less a drunkard's babbling; it proceeded from some very special cause, though probably a deep secret of her own soul; compare *1 Kings 18. 42-44*; *2 Kings 4. 33-35*; *Matt. 26. 44*; *2 Cor. 12. 8*; *James 5. 16, 17*. He therefore bade her go in peace, adding, "And the God of Israel grant thy petition

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\* Hannah deprecated the suspicion that she was a daughter of Belial (*v. 16*). If she had been such, she would have had for brothers the sons of Eli (*ch. 2. 12*).



that thou hast asked of Him"; suggesting that in answering this request the God of *Israel* had something to do for His people, and not merely for an individual woman in distress. And her experience was one with which those are familiar who have taken their share in spiritual movements, when the Holy Spirit of God has been moving upon the face of the waters; see, for instance, the closing verses of Zephaniah. She accepted the word of God from His servant's mouth: she went her way, and she took her part with the rest of the family in the holy feast, and her countenance was no more sad. The beautiful conclusion of that Passover service is recorded in *v.* 19: "And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before Jehovah, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah." For the time, at least, the faith and meekness of Hannah had triumphed, and they had come home a united happy family.

The desire of her heart was given to her, and she took advantage of an Israelite woman's right to abstain from going up to the house of Jehovah, remaining close at home with her child, till it should be possible to take him to the house of Jehovah, and to leave him to dwell there for ever. It was within the rights of Elkanah to disallow the vow of his wife in the day he heard it (*Num.* 30. 6-13), but there is no hint that his views and wishes differed from hers. They were united in their mutual love, and in their wish (like Joshua) that they and their household should serve Jehovah, even when she gave up her firstborn son to a lifelong service in God's House. The naming of the child by the mother is not a solitary instance; yet here it was probably an indication of the deep religious spirit in which she received him as given in answer to her prayer and vows. Enough has already been said of the meaning of the name. As soon as she had weaned him she gave him to Jehovah

with a sacrifice of consecration, brought him to Eli, recalled to the old man's memory the circumstances in which he had promised that the God of Israel would grant her wish, and explained how she had caused her firstborn to be asked for Jehovah. And *v.* 28 ends by saying that he, namely the child, worshipped Jehovah there, no doubt trained to this duty and privilege from that very day.

The Law of Moses did not require a Nazirite to bring any sacrifice at the beginning of his term of dedication. A sacrifice was required, no doubt, if his Naziriteship was defiled by anyone dying near him suddenly. But should the days of his separation be accomplished without any such misfortune befalling him, there was an offering appointed to complete his service, and to let him return freely to the ordinary life from which his vow had withdrawn him for a time. In this case his oblation was one he-lamb for a burnt offering, one ewe-lamb for a sin offering, and one ram for a sacrifice of peace offerings; see Num. 6. 9-11, 13-20; compare Acts 21. 23-27. The peculiarity of Samuel's case is that his sacrifice was offered when his service as a Nazirite was beginning; that this speciality brought him into close connexion with his mother, though not to the exclusion of his father ("she took him up with her, with three bullocks," etc.; "and they slew the bullock, and brought the child to Eli"), and that it was a remarkably costly offering, consisting of no less than three bullocks; see chap. 1. 24, 25.\* The

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\* This unusual oblation of three bullocks has stumbled many readers, perhaps as far back as the time of the Septuagint translators, who rendered "a bullock of three years old"; which Dr. Driver pronounces to be no doubt correct, adding, "The change is really one only in the grouping of letters." But does not he overlook the unavoidable combination in that case of a *feminine* participle with a *masculine* noun, and this in circumstances where the male sex of the animal would be emphatic, if only one animal was offered, and that for a burnt offering? These expositors seem also to have forgotten that one ephah of meal was a liberal supply to accompany even three bullocks, since the Law assigned only three tenths of an ephah to each bullock (Num. 15. 2, 3).

animals offered at the completion of a Nazirite's vow were three, yet only of the flock, a he-lamb, a ewe-lamb, and a ram; this oblation of three bullocks, the most costly animals, from the herd, at the commencement of Samuel's dedication for life, indicated plainly the mysterious importance which his godly mother felt herself impelled to attach to the life and work of her first-born son, whom she had been led to dedicate of her own freewill for life-long service to Jehovah. Even at the consecration or instalment of Aaron and his sons, the oblation from the priests was only a bull-calf and a ram; and from the children of Israel a he-goat, a male calf, a male lamb, also an ox and a ram (see Lev. 9. 2-4, R.V.). Offerings on a larger scale, however, were brought by the kings David and Solomon. It is natural to understand that something of this emphasis is intended by the statement at the end of v. 24, "and the child was young": the child was a child and nothing more, or, as we say, a mere child, on whose account all this lavish expenditure was made at the altar.\*

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\* It is true that Dr. Driver says, "The words can only be rendered 'and the lad was a lad.' It is just possible that this might be understood—in accordance with the Semitic usage explained on 23. 13—as meaning 'the lad was what he was—there is no occasion to say more about him'; but the case is barely parallel to the other examples of the usage; and this fact about Samuel would be so obvious from the narrative in general that it would scarcely deserve to be made the subject of a special remark." And then, preferring to think of an error in the text, he starts from the Septuagint as basis, and proposes a conjectural text of his own. I trust that the account, or explanation, which I have just given removes any difficulty. Yet it may be added that the rendering "the lad was a lad" were there any necessity for adopting it, might mean, "the lad was a servant," in accordance with a very common sense of the Hebrew (and indeed of the English) word, as at chap. 2. 13, 15, the priest's lad, very well translated "servant." The emphasis would then be on the fact that this mere child did service in the tabernacle from the very first, when he could be little more than a pet of the aged priest; so the *child's* ministering is noted at chaps. 2. 18; 3. 1. Certainly v. 25 singles out one animal, "the bullock," (R.V.) as at least occupying the most conspicuous position, but whether as burnt offering, or as sin offering, or as peace offering, we are not told. If the bullock was a sin offering this would point to some indefinite anticipation that Samuel might be called to exercise some kind of priestly office, or to some intimate connexion of his fortunes with those of the whole congregation of Israel: see Lev. 4. 3, 14. This *one* bullock was the offering of the two parents; whereas the whole three came originally from the mother: compare vv. 24 and 25.

By the vow of Hannah the child Samuel was brought from his birth, nay, even before it, into close personal relations with the high-priestly line. And so far as we have any means of forming an opinion, these relations continued to be as close as possible till the aged Eli died. These personal relations had an important purpose to serve in the providence of God, for Samuel might conceivably have been brought to the house of God, and have remained there ever afterwards, without coming much in contact with the aged priest. Eli seems to have been superannuated for years before the birth of Samuel. When Elkanah and his family went to worship at Shiloh, the acting priests seem to have been the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas (chap. 1. 3); not that men would have chosen such infamous wretches to take this position, but apparently it had been unavoidable that they should keep their position and act for their father, because they were in the regular succession. So far as their own character was concerned, they were sons of Belial, they knew not Jehovah (chap. 2. 12). According to *vv.* 13-17, they abused and even defied the provisions of the Law for the perquisites of the priests (it is usual to refer on this point to Deut. 18. 3), so that "the sin of the young men was very great before Jehovah, for men abhorred the offering of Jehovah."

The general meaning of this description of Eli's sons remains unaltered if the marginal rendering of the R.V. is adopted, "for the men despised the offering of Jehovah." But the sense is not better, and the expression describing Eli's sons is not what might have been expected from the usage in the rest of the narrative in these chapters. Dr. Driver seems to have no hesitation in pronouncing the margin right. The reason he gives is that the article is joined to the word "men," and that this denotes men who have been in some manner specified, not men in general. Suppose this to be so, it is natural to under-

stand "the men" to be the children of Israel, who have been described in *v.* 13 as "the people," and in *v.* 14 as "all the Israelites that came thither," namely, to Shiloh; an individual among these being described in the following verses as "the man."

In *vv.* 22-26 some features still darker and more repulsive, at least on the human side, thrust themselves into view: their gross and daring immorality within the house of God, and this involving them in the atrocious guilt of seducing even the women who had devoted themselves to the service of the sanctuary. No wonder that, as their saintly father used to hear of these things, he roused himself to remonstrate with them and to warn them. It was all in vain. They were bent on their own ruin, and Jehovah gave them over to it. This disgusting exhibition of profaneness and vice became the dark background on which the lovely character of Samuel was seen to most advantage. After the dedication by his parents, while he was yet little more than an infant, "he worshipped Jehovah there" (*v.* 28). "Elkanah went to Ramah, to his house. And the child did minister unto Jehovah before Eli the priest." "And the child Samuel grew before Jehovah" (*chap.* 2. 11, 21).<sup>\*</sup> Perhaps the end of *v.* 20 and then *v.* 21 might be translated thus with greater precision:—"And they used to go up into his place;" that is, after every annual blessing bestowed by Eli, for of course Hannah resumed her ordinary home duties in the company of her husband, now that the dedication of Samuel had issued in his remaining at the house of Jehovah. "For Jehovah visited Hannah, and she conceived and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before Jehovah," or "with Jehovah," as in *v.* 26, "And

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<sup>\*</sup> There are minor difficulties and objections urged in respect of particulars in the Hebrew text, on which there is no need to dwell. Assume the correctness of all these, and yet the history would not be much affected.

the child Samuel grew on and was in favour both with Jehovah, and also with men." Such are the testimonies in *vv.* 11, 21, 26.

Probably in *vv.* 18 and 19 there is a hint of at least the beginnings of an official position, however undefined as yet. "But Samuel ministered before Jehovah, being a child, girded with a linen ephod. Moreover, his mother made him a little robe, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice." For both the ephod and the robe were parts of the high-priestly dress, as this is described in *Exod.* 28. The supposition is attractive that the Nazirites came as near to being priests in the house of God as was lawful for any Israelite who was not of the seed of Aaron. If so, they attended like the Levites, assisting even about the altar and the sacrifices; only not themselves permitted actually to offer a sacrifice, or to burn incense in the holy place, yet entitled to wear something of the priestly vestments. And thus David assisted in bringing up the ark; and while he did so, he wore a linen ephod (*2 Sam.* 6. 14). And in the description of Samuel which the witch of Endor gave to Saul, he is said to have been covered with a mantle, or robe (*1 Sam.* 28. 14), the same Hebrew noun as here.

It was in connexion with the presentation of Samuel that his mother Hannah offered the prayer, or song, which is recorded in *chap.* 2. 1-10. There is no need to doubt whether, in dedicating the son for whom she prayed to be a Nazirite for life, she followed the precedent set by Samson's mother, and abstained from wine and the other things forbidden to the Nazirite, until the birth of the dedicated child (see *Judg.* 13. 4-7, 13, 14). It agreed with this that Hannah in her grief had abstained from wine and strong drink at the feast upon sacrifice (*chap.* 1. 15). But now, when she came with her sacrifice and her bottle of wine, this was the case no longer: she was

very much in the position of the Nazirite who had paid his vows ; "after that, the Nazirite may drink wine" (Num. 6. 20).

She had just said to Eli (chap. 1. 26, 27), "O my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto Jehovah. For this child I prayed," as recorded in *vv.* 10 and 12. On that day she had been misunderstood by the high priest, who had reckoned her to be a drunkard. This day, however, she prayed in the fulness of joy, her prayer running over into praise, as is the case times without number in the Psalms, as also in the unceasing experience of the people of God. She, in fact, had become a prophetess like Miriam and Deborah in earlier times, whose contributions to sacred song must have had their influence on Hannah's mind, as one may safely infer, both from the nature of the case and from an examination of the poems. And thus Hannah in turn influenced the author of Psalm 113 and the Blessed Virgin. The song of Hannah, as it is often called, does indeed fit into her situation as a woman who had been without children, and had suffered from the ill-feeling and the insults of her rival, to whom a family had been given. But in the mercy granted to herself, Hannah saw the evidence of the holiness, goodness, and power of Jehovah, as these shall be experienced by all who feel overwhelmed by difficulties and yet put their trust in Him. Like Deborah, a true mother in Israel, she rises high above personal wrongs and sufferings and deliverance, and thinks of her people Israel, who were the people of Jehovah : "For the pillars of the earth are Jehovah's, and He hath set the world upon them." Darkness and defeat are no more than passing trials, to be quickly followed by such deliverances as are described over and over again in the Book of Judges. The failure of Eli the priestly judge, and before his failure that of Samson the Nazirite judge, neither of these discouraged

her.\* Rather, these failures whetted her appetite, and confirmed her hope in the promises of Jehovah, who had helped her surprisingly, and who would do no less for His people. She knew that from patriarchal times there had been promises of kings in Israel (Gen. 17. 16 ; 35. 11 ; Num. 23. 21 ; 24. 7). And she felt, as many in the times of the Judges had begun to feel, that there was need for a king in Jeshurun (Deut. 33. 5), however little she might understand of the manner in which this king should be set up. Since Gideon had refused the invitation of the people to rule over them, saying, "Jehovah shall rule over you," she could only speak emphatically, and say that this coming king was not to be for himself, but was to be in some peculiar manner the subject and the representative of Jehovah. Accordingly she ended her song in these lofty strains, "They that strive with Jehovah shall be broken to pieces ; against them shall He thunder in heaven : Jehovah shall judge the ends of the earth ; and He shall (perhaps rather a prayer, ' may He ' ) give strength to His king, and exalt the horn of His anointed." (See note A at the end.)

Some commentators have been much exercised on account of the verb which Hannah uses in v. 5, "They that were hungry have ceased." But why should there be such difficulty in understanding her language? The hungry have ceased to be hungry, no longer are there any hungry ones ; as in Deborah's Song (Judg. 5. 7), "The rulers ceased in Israel," or, as others translate, "The villages ceased in Israel" ; that is, they ceased to be rulers, or villages. In short, when Hannah says there are no longer hungry ones among us in Israel, she sees the coming of that happy time promised in Deut. 15. 4, 5,

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\* If one tries to distinguish the shades of meaning in the two Hebrew words in Hannah's song which are translated *strength*, the strength by which no man shall prevail (v. 9) may be what we think of when we speak of mere force ; whereas the strength which Jehovah gives to His king (v. 10) is something nobler, perhaps divine.



R. V. : "Howbeit there shall be no poor with thee (for Jehovah will surely bless thee in the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it) if only thou diligently hearken unto the voice of Jehovah thy God," etc. Hannah has been hearkening to this voice, and, after all the vicissitudes during the times of the Judges, she sees a glorious revival; particularly if we may translate the following words of her Song, as we very literally may, "Until the barren hath borne seven," the opposite of the circumstances in *Isai. 4. 1.* And thus the Song of Hannah ends in assurances of a glorious deliverance which she foresaw coming to Israel, not inferior to the mighty acts of Jehovah on their behalf, by the hand of Joshua, or Barak, or Gideon, or other saviours already raised up. Compare her language with the descriptions of his victorious energy against their enemies in *Josh. 10. 11*; *Judg. 5. 20, 21.* Hannah's expectations were realised in the administration of her son Samuel.

To this holy woman, one of a holy family, who had been strongly moved to give new emphasis to their hereditary consecration by the Nazirite vow for life which she had laid upon her son before he was born, there was granted the gift of prophecy. This gift of prophecy was intimately connected with the spiritual calling of Israel, their shortcomings, their dangers, their degradation, their needs; and the promises of God had not been an illusion even among the many chastisements which had come upon them. Moses himself, the great lawgiver, had seen with joy how two of seventy of the elders who had been called to assist him, had been endowed with this gift of prophecy; and to his minister Joshua, who felt jealous, he had said, "Art thou jealous for my sake? Would God that all Jehovah's people were prophets, that Jehovah would put His Spirit upon them" (*Num. 11. 29*). In his latest legislation Moses had held out the bright promise, "Jehovah

thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken." And he had enlarged upon this in language which encouraged Israel to hope that prophets would be raised up over and over again in their history (Deut. 18. 15-22). There is, however, no appearance of the gift of prophecy to his successor Joshua, who had been jealous for Moses' sake, nor in any contemporary of Joshua. In the period of the Judges, which presented various peculiarities, there had certainly been prophets; but, so far as we read, they had been very few, and one might say sporadic. The only one whose name has been preserved to us is Deborah, who was at once prophetess and judge. There is one other prophet unquestionably mentioned, and it is probable that there was at least another (Judg. 6. 7-10; 10. 10-14). In 1 Sam. 2. 27-36, "a man of God" came to Eli with a terrific message of judgment. In one respect the withholding of his name gives additional emphasis to his mission. For Eli was at once the judge of Israel and their high priest, and it is he who might have been the natural organ of communication from Jehovah to Israel. But he was not honoured with any revelation. An unnamed man was entrusted with the message which denounced ruin to Eli and his house. Any discussion of the title "man of God" may be appropriately deferred till it occurs again in the narrative of the meeting of Samuel and Saul.

This epoch-making prophecy began by asking Eli whether Jehovah had revealed himself to the house of Eli's father while yet in Egypt and under Pharaoh? Yes. The call of Moses and Aaron, and the work which they did, were matters known to every Israelite. In His sovereign grace Jehovah had chosen Eli's forefather out of all the tribes of Israel for the priesthood, to sacrifice and burn incense, wearing the official vestment, the ephod; and had given for the use of his father's house the

offerings which the children of Israel made by fire. Then Jehovah, by His prophet, asked, "Wherefore kick at my sacrifice and at my offering?" It no doubt was more especially the act of his sons, yet he is held responsible along with them.\* No doubt there had been a promise of an everlasting priesthood to Aaron's house (Lev. 7. 35, 36; Num. 18. 8, 11, 19). Yet such promises involved a corresponding engagement to obedience on the part of the priests; see such acts of obedience as in Exod. 32. 25-29, and such habits of obedience as in Deut. 33. 8-11. Gross, abominable, and presumptuous disobedience could not fail to result in the withholding of the promised blessing: in a parallel case Jehovah had said of the entire nation, "Ye shall know my alienation," or otherwise translated, "the revoking of my promise" (Num. 14. 34). Eli could scarcely fail to contrast his son Phinehas with the well-known priest of this name, Aaron's grandson, to whom, on a memorable occasion, Jehovah gave "the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was jealous for his God," etc. (Num. 25. 10-13). The circumstances ought to have been the more impressive to Eli and his sons; because the line of that ancient Phinehas had somehow lost the high priesthood, we know not when or how, and it had come into the possession of Eli's house, who belonged to the line of Aaron's

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\* The two acts, kicking at these offerings and making themselves fat, as they are charged against these priests, are charged against Jeshurun by Moses speaking in his song (Deut. 32. 15). Moreover, the verb for kicking is the same in both messages, and it occurs nowhere else. Manifestly these verbs express the priests' abuse of the prerogatives assigned to them in connexion with these sacrifices.

Many pronounce the text of this prophecy corrupt. Yet it admits of the most rigidly exact translation, "to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel for my people?" The sons of Eli disregarded the laws by which the fat of the sacrifices, and in some cases the entire sacrifice, was given direct to God. Instead of taking contentedly the portions assigned by Him to them, they snatched whatsoever they pleased. Yet these sacrifices were not for them as individuals, or as a caste; they were for Israel, whether the people were admitted to feast on them, or whether they saw them consumed on their behalf, in some cases by the priests (see a striking case in Lev. 10. 16, 17), in others by the fire on the altar.

younger son Ithamar. Now, said this prophet, it must be taken from them also. The details of the disastrous judgment which should overtake them are given by this prophet in chap. 2. 31-34, culminating in what he announces as the sign (for a sign may occur even after the events of which it is the predicted token, as in Exod. 3. 12)—the death of Eli's two sons in one day.\*

This affliction of God's habitation was to be "in all the wealth which God shall give Israel"; perhaps the English might be smoother and plainer, "in all the wealth which God would give Israel"; that is, if circumstances had permitted the bestowal of His promises; in other words, if their own misconduct, in which the priests were the daring leaders, had not prevented it. On this subject compare Psalm 81. 4-16; Isai. 48. 17-19; and earlier, Deut. 28; Josh. 23; and Judg. 2. 1-3. A grammatical criticism might be made, that "God," the subject of the verb, is a supplement, having nothing answering to it in the Hebrew. But this is too plain to cause any difficulty. Nor would the sense be really different, if any purist insisted on dispensing with the word supplied. In that case "the habitation" would become the subject of

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\* Dr. Driver looks back over the whole prophecy, and thinks that, as the text stands, v. 32a expresses a consequence of v. 31; yet since it deals with something which Eli himself is to witness, v. 31 must refer to something falling within Eli's own lifetime, which can only be the bloody disaster in the course of which his two sons died on the battle-field. From this he infers that the survivor in v. 33 is Ahitub (chap. 14. 3), and that v. 35 means Samuel by the faithful priest. This, however, is not how Dr. Driver himself understands the prophecy. He considers that there is corruption in the passage, certainly in the beginning of v. 32; that v. 31 speaks of Saul's massacre of the priests at Nob, and v. 32 of the permanent weakening of Eli's family. For myself, I should think it too narrow a view to call v. 32a a consequence of v. 31. Rather the whole verses are a continuous and very complex judgment, the parts of which have mutual connexions; compare Samuel's prophecy to Eli, chap. 3. 11, 14.

In one clause of v. 32 I prefer the R.V., which is so far the margin of the A.V.; that is, I prefer the *neuter*, the affliction or adversity of the habitation, rather than the *masculine*, an adversary in it. Obviously there is no great difference of meaning, whichever translation be preferred.

the sentence ; thus, "in all the wealth which it would have given Israel." The great principle applied then as much as when the apostle expressed it, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy." And on the other hand, the good which would come to a house from the habitation of Jehovah being there, and rightly honoured, is seen in the history of Obed-edom's house in 2 Sam. 6. 11, 12.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE PROPHETIC OFFICE OF SAMUEL.

**H**E who held the double office of priest and judge in Israel was discredited, in his family, if not in his own person, by the message of that unnamed prophet. At that very time another prophet was arising in Israel, a man who was to occupy a higher position in Israel than any other servant of Jehovah except Moses.

The personality of this individual, who now comes forward very prominently, has been already partially revealed in connexion with his family and his mother's vow, and his training under her care, encouraged and supported as she was by her husband. Henceforward he is to be studied as he occupies an independent position. "The child Samuel ministered unto Jehovah before Eli" (chap. 3. 1). This had been said already (chap. 2. 11, 18). Yet the references to his growing, in connexion with his service (*vv.* 21, 26 ; 3. 19), favour the supposition that his ministrations were all the time assuming more and more of a definite shape, and of an important nature, beyond what a child might render, and yet in contrast with the horrible abuse of their position for service by Eli's sons.

There was room for the youth who had been dedicated from the first, and marvellously prepared to fill the vacant place which caused so many aching hearts in Israel. The history is continued in chap. 3. 1, "And the word of Jehovah was precious in those days : there was no open vision." Of course the people in those days had the Law of Moses, and they might go to the priests and to the judge for information and decision (Deut. 17. 8-13). But this was within a very limited sphere, very much what might be called judicial cases. There was no

stream of instruction from a body of inspired messengers, the prophets, who were qualified to explain and apply the Law, as the changing circumstances of the people made this desirable or even essential to the well-being of the commonwealth. Now and then a prophet did rise up: but the word of Jehovah was precious, being rare, as is the translation on the margin of the R.V. There was no open vision, literally, no vision widely diffused: the little light there was seemed only to make the darkness visible. Of Samuel himself, at this turning point in his life, it is said (chap. 3. 7), "now Samuel did not yet know Jehovah, neither was the word of Jehovah yet revealed unto him."

The situation is well known through the wonderfully graphic account in chap. 3. One night Eli was laid down in his place: Samuel also was in his place in the temple of Jehovah, where the ark of God was;\* for if the ark had not

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\* I cannot but reckon it a strange mistake when men speak of the temple at Shiloh as if Samuel were sleeping in the room where the ark was, some chamber quite different in its arrangements from the most holy place in the tabernacle of Moses, though Dr. Driver's language seems to favour his way of speaking. Professor S. P. Smith is quite decided, saying, "Samuel, at least, lay in the apartment in which the ark stood." There is nothing to lead to the supposition that Samuel, any more than Eli, slept in that apartment. And if both Samuel and Eli were there, there would be no reason to doubt that this apartment for the ark was crowded with the lamp of God as well as these two beds; whereas the unvarying belief of the children of Israel was that "Jehovah said He would dwell in the thick darkness" (1 Kings 8. 12). The Hebrew noun, translated "temple," favours the idea of a spacious building, one not certainly with fewer apartments than the two which Moses erected; and it may well have included chambers erected at a subsequent time for the ministers of God to occupy. The language of the narrative leads me to think that Eli and Samuel slept in different apartments. Samuel ran to Eli at the first call, and Eli answered him, if we translate as literally as possible, "Return, lie down" (v. 5). The second time Samuel arose and went to Eli; and again he was answered, "Return, lie down" (v. 6). The third time the call began much in the same way (v. 8). Now there is never a hint that Eli's ears were deaf, though his eyes were dim and may have derived little advantage from the lamp; the infirmities of blindness and deafness very often are not found together in the aged. Therefore, if the two had been lying close to one another, Eli might well have heard the three calls, certainly would not have missed the whole of them. His intelligence was sound and acute, for "he perceived that Jehovah was calling the child," if we attempt to give the tense of the original as precisely as we can. When Samuel had gone at Eli's command, and had lain down in his place, Jehovah came, and stood, and called, as at other times.

been there, no Israelite would have thought of this as Jehovah's house, or tent, or trysting place. It is not certainly known at what hour the lamp used to go out, early in the night or toward morning. This only is known (*v.* 15), that after Samuel had had the vision, "he lay till the morning, and opened the doors of the house of Jehovah": the doors are mentioned here, as the doorposts are at chap. 1. 9. Eli's sons may have been too careless, or too daringly wicked, to sleep on the holy premises, as their father and Samuel did. And the doors might nearly as well have remained shut, if those worthless priests and the services performed by them were all to which the worshippers could look forward when the doors should be opened: compare Mal. 1. 10, 11.

The terms of intimate affection on which the aged priest and the holy youth stood toward one another are indicated by the expressions "my son," "Samuel, my son" (*vv.* 6, 16). The act of Jehovah took the form of a thrice-repeated call to Samuel by name. All the three times this call was misunderstood by him, so that he offered his services to Eli. But Eli had spiritual discernment enough to grasp the situation, and to perceive that Samuel was being called to be a servant of Jehovah in some high peculiar sense. And when Jehovah came and took up His position (observe the emphatic Hebrew verb in *v.* 10), and called Samuel for the fourth time, Samuel answered as Eli had taught him to do, "Speak, for Thy servant heareth." With this narrative may be compared those of the calls to Moses, in Exod. 3, and of four prophets, as recorded in Isai. 6, in Jer. 1, in Ezek. 3, and in Amos 7. Samuel's hesitation and fear to tell the vision to Eli, followed by Eli's insistence to have every word of it told to him, on pain of Samuel enduring the same or severer penalties in his own experience, may be compared with the lessons to one of these prophets, a child as Samuel was, direct from Jehovah himself (Jer. 1. 17-19; 15. 19-21).



The most remarkable example of a call to the work of the Lord, however, is given in the history of the apostle Paul (Acts 9), with the parallel accounts.

The message entrusted to Samuel for Eli (*vv.* 11-14) goes back on that which had been spoken to Eli by the unnamed prophet. For so it is said (*v.* 12), "In that day I will perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from the beginning even unto the end." Yet since the message to the child is much the shorter of the two, it is not surprising that it confines itself to one point, concentrating everything on this. What the un-named prophet said to Eli may have been spoken to him alone and in secret: now everything was to come out in public, and it was to make the ears of all who heard it tingle: an expression which is elsewhere used of appalling divine judgments.\*

There is some difficulty as to what is said about the sin of Eli's sons (*v.* 13). The translation in the A.V., "Made themselves vile," has support from the simple form of the Hebrew verb and from the cognate adjective; an appeal in its favour might also be made to the use of another form of the verb in chap. 2. 30, where it is said of Eli's house, "They that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." Yet in the form of the verb occurring in Samuel's prophecy the rendering is always, to *curse*: hence, in connexion with the dative construction, the R.V. translates, "Did bring a curse upon themselves." No doubt there is some connexion between the two meanings: it is a word used almost exclusively of cursing by men, not by God, and indeed, of cursing by wicked men.†

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\* *V.* 13. "For I have told him," is literally, as in A.V. margin, "And I will tell him." Nothing is more suitable. Samuel, like Isaiah and Jeremiah, was commissioned to begin his prophetic labours by announcing the wrath of God and the consequent judgments.

† Dr. Driver observes that the verb "does not mean to bring a curse upon any one, and is followed not by a *dative*, but by an *accusative*." On this account he

The helplessness of Eli as he remonstrated feebly with his sons (chap. 2. 22-25, where the habitual action is marked throughout by the tense in Hebrew) was notorious to all Israel. And if the flagrant misconduct of his sons led men to abhor, or contemn, the offering of Jehovah (chap. 2. 17), Eli might well be reminded of his own warning to them (chap. 2. 25), while he received the assurance that no sacrifice or offering should ever expiate their iniquity : a parallel this to the terrific assurance in Isai. 22. 14, where there is implied that oath of God which is plainly uttered here.

Eli knew that Jehovah had been revealing himself to Samuel and putting a word into his mouth ; and his own conscience told him what the nature of this word must be, and his truly gracious nature prepared him humbly to accept it. So that, while Samuel hesitated to tell Eli, Eli insisted on being told, and charged Samuel to do the prophet's duty with the utmost faithfulness : compare the reference already made to the charge given to Jeremiah, and still more stringently to Ezekiel. For it could be only in very exceptional, well-marked circumstances that a prophet might hide what had been revealed to him ; compare Psalm 40. 10 with Jer. 38. 14, 15, 24-27. It may be that growth of grace in the old man, or that the special power from heaven which rested on Samuel, is seen in this humble and ready submission to the will of Jehovah as revealed to Samuel : whereas, so far as appears, the message of the unnamed prophet was received in silence. Possibly that message had been sent years before : in that case, so far as it was known to the more utterly ungodly members of Eli's house, it may have been forgotten by them, while others may have

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has little doubt that the Septuagint reading is correct : " His sons cursed God." It might be more advisable, considering our very limited knowledge, to content ourselves with asking a question instead of making an affirmation : especially since many a time a variation in the construction of a Hebrew verb is known to have the effect of modifying its meaning.

presumptuously imagined that Jehovah would be slack concerning His threatenings, as some men imagine in regard to His promise (2 Pet. 3. 9).

However painful this first message to Samuel must have been to him, as well as to the aged high priest, it had the effect of making and marking the position which Samuel was now called to fill. No one could any longer say, as before this message came (chap. 3. 7), "Now Samuel did not yet know Jehovah, neither was the word of Jehovah yet revealed unto him." Certainly he was still young, and he "grew" (*v.* 19); compare what had been said of him, chap. 2. 21, 26. Thus it was that, when he set up Saul as king, he could say (chap. 12. 2), "I am old and grey-headed; and, behold, my sons are with you, and I have walked before you from my youth unto this day." His holy, wise, consistent life, from childhood upwards, as known to all Israel, was another of the elements of moral and spiritual power in Samuel by which he was prepared, like the apostle Paul in other circumstances, to be a chosen vessel for the service of his Lord. His mother's dedication of him, before he was born, to be a Nazirite for life, his home ties in a godly family, his training under the eye of the broken-hearted high priest and in the sight of all Israel, these were advantages which met wonderfully in Samuel's personal experience, and adapted him for his work, now when the decisive moment had come, and he had proved faithful to the prophetic calling, as "he told Eli every whit, and hid nothing from him" (*v.* 15). This faithfulness at the beginning of his prophetic career, however painful he felt it to be, was again displayed by him towards the end of it, in his dealing with King Saul (chap. 15. 16-19). And it is worthy of notice, that, while Samuel continued to grow, the sacred writer adds (*v.* 19), "Jehovah was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground." The reader of the original sees how this statement is markedly

independent of the preceding statement, that "Samuel grew." It is as if he had written : on the one hand, Samuel grew ; on the other hand, Jehovah was with him, etc. Or the verb might be taken as a pluperfect, "Samuel grew : and Jehovah had been with him" all along, this being truly the cause of his growing.

The evidence that Samuel was a true prophet, and that Jehovah was anew visiting His people with His gracious presence, after the preciousness or rarity of His word, as noticed at *v.* 1, comes out in successive statements.

*First.*—Jehovah "did let none of his words fall to the ground" (*v.* 19). The solemn prophecy was seen to be moving onward towards fulfilment : Eli's house grew riper for judgment, and some of the fruits of the harvest they had been sowing for themselves began to appear. In addition to this, the language naturally conveys the meaning that other divine messages came to Samuel, and that the history furnished verifications of them all. Contrast with this the test of a false prophet (*Deut.* 18. 21, 22).

*Secondly.*—The conviction which arose in the minds of individual Israelites, here and there, spread till it became unanimous and universal : "and all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of Jehovah" (*v.* 20). The participle or adjective here translated "established" is the same that is translated in chap. 2. 35, first, "faithful," and next "sure," of the faithful priest and the sure house : the combination of all these three renderings may assist the English reader to take in the full meaning of the term. This was the conviction of all Israel, of all who assembled to the worship at Shiloh, coming as they did, according to the Law of Moses, from the whole land, even from its extremities, and they carried this conviction back with them to their homes throughout the entire territory occupied by the Twelve Tribes.

Compare the influence of the Lord Jesus Christ, as it spread from Jerusalem to Galilee, having been seen by the Galileans when they went up to worship at the Temple (John 4. 45).

*Thirdly.*—According to *v.* 21, “Jehovah appeared again in Shiloh ; for Jehovah revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of Jehovah.” This continues and confirms what has been said of repeated divine communications to Samuel, not inferior in distinctness to the first, nor probably in other qualities which arrested attention and made men feel that Jehovah was indeed revealing Himself by this His word to Samuel. Since this revelation was “to Samuel in Shiloh,” it is inconceivable that he should never have come into collision with the worthless sons of Eli ; and the additional revelations which are not recorded may well have contained messages for them, since they would certainly contain lessons on God’s law of truth and purity and obedience—lessons which the people knew to be irreconcilable with the life led by these two bad men.

There is, however, some uncertainty as to the interpretation to be put upon the first verb in *v.* 21, “Jehovah appeared again in Shiloh.” Some reference has already been made to this at *pp.* 37, 38, in noticing the appearances of the Angel of Jehovah in the time of the Judges. Something more will be found in Note B. The sacred history often relates that Jehovah appeared to the patriarchs, and also to Moses at the tabernacle. The latest of these appearances is recorded in Deut. 31. 14, 15, when Moses was warned that his death was near, and he was bid to call Joshua, who then received his charge that he might be the successor of Moses as they went and presented themselves at the tent of meeting or trysting tent. “And Jehovah appeared in the tent in a pillar of cloud, and the pillar of cloud stood over the door of the tent.” It need not be thought surprising if some such appearance took place on occasion of this new servant of Jehovah being marked out for a combination of

offices which gave him a position much higher than even Joshua's. Such may be the meaning of this verse. Jehovah appeared again, as He had appeared on previous occasions of momentous interest, at the tent of meeting or trysting tent; with this one difference from those earlier occasions, that the tent had not moved from place to place for centuries, during which it had remained at Shiloh.

Whatever might be the precise manner of the appearance, it was somehow analogous to such a case as the inauguration of public worship under Aaron and his sons the priests. (See Lev. 9. 22-24.) Now that all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of Jehovah, the dark period came to an end, during which Jehovah had been withholding the manifestations of His presence from the assemblies for public worship at Shiloh. He no longer refrained Himself or hid His face, as the Psalmist complained, but appeared once more as the living God in the midst of His people Israel, and He let none of Samuel's words fall to the ground. These might be either words of judgment, such as He had spoken against the house of Eli, or words of mercy in case Israel should return to Jehovah. (See chap. 7. 3.)

The influence of such a prophet was seen in Israel at once and unmistakably. In chap. 3. 21, we read how "Jehovah revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of Jehovah." The next verse begins, "And the word of Samuel came to all Israel," so that the word of Jehovah and the word of Samuel are reckoned to be practically the same. The identification becomes the more marked if we break up the verse (chap. 4. 1), assigning the first half of it to chap. 3; many commentators do so, and their notion is supported by the division into paragraphs in the R.V. Nevertheless it makes no appreciable difference if we keep by the old division into chapters. That division has the advantage of giving more prominence to the

word of Samuel to Israel, as the living force at the back of the movement in Israel against their enemies and oppressors the Philistines. For this procedure brings to mind the similar narratives in the Book of Judges ; how the gift of the Spirit of God, and the consequent working of some chosen servant, roused the people and led them on to the victory by which Jehovah saved them from their enemies.

It is true that on a hasty reading of this narrative in chap. 4 the first impression might be that it stood out in contrast to those in Judges, inasmuch as here there is the record of disastrous failure bringing disgrace upon the ark of God and all the worship ordained at His house. But this would be a superficial view. The movement inaugurated by Samuel stirred the deepest feelings of the nation by the word of Jehovah. It was their own sinfulness which in the first instance made victory impossible, as Joshua had seen in Achan's case. Their crushing defeat stirred the heart of the nation through and through. It discovered to them their guilt, and sent home the conviction of it. And through this trying process they were brought completely under the influence of the faithful prophet, whose diligence they witnessed during twenty subsequent years of depression, in which undoubtedly they would also have abundant evidence of his sympathy. And thus, in the end, a truly glorious deliverance was achieved for them by him who at once took his place as the foremost man in Israel. This history never can be understood, nor others like it in the Bible, so long as men think to penetrate their meaning by breaking them up into fragments ; on the contrary, by doing so we shall inevitably misjudge them, and lose the instruction which they were intended to convey to us (1 Cor. 10. 11). The narrative ever presents Samuel to us as a prophet endowed with deep piety, strong good sense, and marked foresight, by the possession of which he was fitted and intended to lead

God's people ; compare, for instance, chap. 10. 2-8, 17-24. So, also, it exhibits him as the wise and faithful friend who to the end taught and warned the people, and felt and prayed for them (chap. 12. 16-25; 13. 13, 14; 15. 10-31, 35).

Samuel is now set before us as a prophet, established, faithful, or sure, whichever of these adjectives is reckoned the best translation of the Hebrew : the like of him there had not been in Israel since Moses. This is the view of him presented in Scripture itself. "Then said Jehovah unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people" (Jer. 15. 1). Again, "Moses and Aaron among His priests, and Samuel among them that call upon His name : they called upon Jehovah, and He answered them. He spake unto them in the pillar of the cloud : they kept His testimonies, and the statute that he gave them" (Psalm 99. 6, 7). This latter passage, however, leads on to a different and less easy subject, which must afterwards receive consideration—the priesthood of Samuel. On turning to a passage in the New Testament (Heb. 11. 32, 33), we find a reference to still another aspect of Samuel's work ; he was judge as well as prophet. "And what shall I more say ? For the time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah ; of David and Samuel, and the prophets : who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises," etc.

Yet there is one other passage which concentrates attention on his prophetic office, and brings into view an important consideration, the fact that he is the head of an uninterrupted line of prophets. In an address to the people of Jerusalem, the apostle Peter had referred to the promises to their ancestors made by Moses, that God would raise up a prophet like unto Moses, and that resistance to this prophet would prove the ruin of every one guilty of it. He went on to say, "Yea, and



all the prophets, from Samuel and them that followed after, as many as have spoken, they also told of these days" (Acts 3. 24). There had been prophets since the death of Moses : but it has already been noticed that their emergence might be called occasional and sporadic. From Samuel's time and onwards, the remarkable peculiarity is that prophets were never wanting till the Old Testament revelation was completed. If at one single moment the unwonted complaint burst forth (Psalm 74. 9), "we see not our signs, there is no more any prophet" ; it stands so thoroughly isolated and alone that it arrests attention by its strangeness. At the worst, it is but for a moment : indeed, the language of this psalmist is evidence that he himself was a prophet, though in the extremity of the trial of his faith, he was on the point of losing hold of the fact. If so, he was under a mistake like that of Elijah, who overlooked the 7,000 whom Jehovah had reserved for Himself in Israel. It was very different in times after the close of the Old Testament revelations : contrast what is said in 1 Macc. 4. 46 ; "They pulled down the altar and laid up the stones in the mountain of the house in a convenient place, until there should come a prophet to give an answer concerning them." Also chap. 9. 27, at the time when Judas Maccabæus had fallen in battle, "And there was great tribulation in Israel, such as was not since the time that no prophet appeared unto them." Samuel then appears at the head of the glorious succession of the prophets, for whom he made eminently wise preparation, issuing in those schools of the prophets with which he stands in close connexion, if indeed he was not the founder of them. Their nature and constitution are obscure, and it is unnecessary here to become involved in the discussions which have arisen regarding them. Samuel may have given more attention to the companies of the prophets after he was relieved of civil duties when Saul became king, or still more,

after Saul's backsliding courses led Samuel to keep more and more aloof from civil affairs. Yet, from chap. 10. 5, it is clear that before Saul was made king, Samuel spoke to him in a manner which implies that these bands or companies of the prophets were well known.

It is of more importance to take notice of what Samuel's office as a prophet directly led him to undertake. Undoubtedly it is too restricted a view that simply identifies prophecy with prediction of the future. On the other hand, it is a view no less certainly erroneous, and much more mischievous, which shuts out the predictive element, or even stigmatises it as soothsaying, with which a true prophet of Jehovah could not have anything to do. In reality His prophets were connected with the past, the present, and the future, like their Lord and Master, who "was and is and is to come." It was their duty to make themselves acquainted with all that He had already revealed for the use of His people, to confirm those earlier messages, and to apply them to the case of those to whom they themselves were being sent. Again, it is an obvious truth that the prophet ministered to his own generation; but there is a way of stating this truth which either degrades it into a truism, or else is practically a mistaken and misleading teaching. The prophet received light from heaven upon the present position of his people, probably very much as he pondered the lessons given in the past. And as he did this faithfully and diligently, he was carried forward to discoveries of certain things which were to come.\*

What the prophet had pre-eminently for his study was the book of the Law of Jehovah given to Moses, and by him entrusted to the priests who bare the ark of the covenant of Jehovah, and along with them to the elders of Israel. This

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\* I have explained my own convictions on this subject in the essay with which my commentary on Isaiah opens, pp. 38-56.

they were to read to the assembled people, in the solemnity, or tryst, "of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, when all Israel is come to appear before Jehovah thy God in the place which He shall choose." For this purpose the copy was laid up by the side of the ark of the covenant of Jehovah (Dent. 31. 9-13, 24-27). This copy of the Law would be familiar to a devout young man like Samuel, while he waited upon Eli and ministered at the tabernacle in Shiloh. There was very much in it to attract his reverent sustained attention : all the more so on account of the wickedness of the priests and the disordered condition of the people, who had become disgusted with such religious services as were still kept up there. Samuel must have seen what the people needed in this crisis of their spiritual history, as well as what he was called to do, now that the children of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, knew that he was established to be a prophet of Jehovah, the God of Israel, who was anew manifesting Himself in Shiloh. His work, and that of the prophets whom he was the instrument of raising up in a blessed succession, was not a blind or aimless struggle, the result of which might perhaps be some good, in spite of many blunders and fruitless experiments. Samuel knew the principles on which he had to take his stand, and from which he was to make his start. He was not ignorant of the direction in which his work for Israel in the future was to lie. It was his privilege to read the Law, to meditate on it, and to learn what was to be done and how to do it. He was himself the first of the line of prophets. Therefore he was head and leader of *the former prophets*, as the Jews came to style those who lived in the earlier and more perplexing ages of the adult Jewish state. For he had also the times of all the Judges, and before them, of Moses' successor, Joshua, to study. Either he read the books which we know under the names Joshua and Judges, or else his godly upbringing had

thoroughly imbued him with the history of those ages, and with the lessons to be learned from them. He may in fact have been the editor or compiler of these books; as it has been happily expressed, the literary executor of the servants of God who preceded him. No doubt, he was helped in this discharge of his prophetic duties by his mother's training, of which her Song is a sample, with its vision of corruption swept away and of grace imparted, and of preparation for the coming anointed King. Chap. 10. 25 indicates that Samuel felt it his duty to do as Moses had done, when he finished writing the Law and then laid it up beside the ark that it might be preserved and be read to all the people. For after Saul had been by lot elected king, "then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before Jehovah."\*

One is not tied down to any opinion as to the form of those books in the Old Testament to which the Jews give the name of *The former prophets*, namely, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. Yet those testimonies in Scripture itself to what Joshua and Samuel did are at all events favourable to the supposition that those eminent servants of God had something to do with the composition of the books. The statements may be compared with what is said of the history at the close of the next great life spent in the service of Jehovah and His people, and the written record preserved of it (1 Chron. 29. 29, 30). "Now the acts of David the king, first and last, behold they are written in the words of Samuel the seer, and in the words of Nathan the prophet, and in the words of Gad

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\* There is an old controversy, not yet definitely settled, whether this ought not rather to be translated, as in the R.V. margin, "Wrote it in *the* book." This translation brings us nearer to the language which describes the concluding action of Joshua's administration (Josh. 24. 26); "And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God," etc. The same controversy exists over the definite and the indefinite article with regard to the book in which Moses wrote the curse upon Amalek (Exod. 17. 14).

the seer : with all his reign and his might, and the times that went over him, and over Israel, and over all the kingdoms of the countries." The bearing of this statement upon some matters involved in the conception of the kingdom may be deferred for the moment. But, to begin with, its testimony is clear enough as to the position and work of the writers to whom we are indebted for it, whether we do or do not paraphrase the noun "words" by "history," as in the R.V. and in the A.V. margin. Certainly there is nothing impossible or unnatural in supposing that Samuel himself was the author so far as 1 Sam. 16. 13, or it might be even to chap. 24. 22.

If we now look at the matter of this statement in 1 Chron. 29. 29, 30, as distinguished from what is said of the persons engaged upon the literary work, the subject with which the Chronicler deals is David and his acts, "with all his reign." The noun employed here for "reign" (*mal'chuth*) is one which is generally translated "kingdom"; see Num. 24. 7; 1 Sam. 20. 31; 1 Kings 2. 12; Jer. 10. 7. Yet there seems to be native to it the idea of the majesty and grandeur of the royal state (see Psalm 45. 6 (7 in the Hebrew); 103. 19; 145. 11-13), and often in the Book of Esther. There is a different yet closely cognate word (*mamlachah*) very commonly in use; for instance, in this first Book of Samuel, chap. 10. 18; 13. 13, 14; 24. 20 (21 in the Hebrew); 27. 5; 28. 17. In this word, however, there is no such prominence of the idea of majesty. Is the inference strained if we suppose that these three "histories" brought out David's royal state and the majesty of the kingdom of the Lord's anointed? And further, they embraced "the times that went over him." Here the curious and uncommon use of the Hebrew noun in the plural (for in the singular it is very common) may be analogous in meaning to the Latin word *vices*; then it would mean "the vicissitudes that went over him, and over Israel, and over the kingdoms (*mamlachah* not *mal'*-

*chuth*) of the countries." It is in complete harmony with this meaning that, in the only two other passages in which the plural occurs, "vicissitudes" expresses the notion which was partly, if not prominently, in the writer's mind; Psalm 31. 15 (16 in the Hebrew), "My times are in Thy hand"; 1 Chron. 12. 32, "The children of Issachar, men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do." If this idea lie in the word, then reference is made here to a history of what may perhaps justly be styled that revolutionary period which was introduced by the administration of Samuel, and which was completed by the reign of David, who handed over to his son Solomon a settled and glorious kingdom. Since all Scripture is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction which is in righteousness, it is quite as we might expect, that if Samuel himself gave an inspired narrative of his administration, he should give it very briefly, presenting only the essential features, as these might be studied by the thoughtful and godly whom he trained. His administration was of vast importance, as it initiated those constitutional changes; but its intrinsic importance was as nothing compared with David's reign, of which, therefore, Scripture gives a much fuller account.

Yet there was probably less importance in the matter of Samuel's changes than in the manner of their initiation, which required his head and hand to guide them, as this Nazirite for life was called and equipped for his momentous task by the Spirit of Jehovah resting on him. As for the matter of those changes, in many cases they passed out of sight, in view of others more important which took their place. His arrangements were sometimes like stepping stones, by which men might reach the constitution of Israel as the kingdom of Jehovah in the hands of the house of David. It is in this way that an architect makes a pencil sketch, and rubs out the pencillings when he comes to replace it by his lines drawn over it with

pen and ink, and has a permanent drawing; or as an artist throws aside a sketch which has been the basis for his work, and leaves a finished picture. Similarly in the prophecies, especially in the prophetic forecasts of a series of events, we frequently meet, not with a detailed narrative of the actual historical process, but with the prophet's vision of what things tended to become, what they were to be in the end. And the like may be seen in the histories which prophets wrote, as when a few verses in 1 Sam. 7. 13-17 give a marvellous summary of what Samuel did in his administration as judge. Again, two verses (chap. 14. 47, 48) give the substance of the good points in Saul's reign, with its many achievements.

Taking this sort of comprehensive survey of Samuel's position as the first of the continuous line of prophets, it is worthy of remark that this passage (1 Chron. 29. 29) describes him as "Samuel the seer." So 1 Chron. 26. 28 speaks of "all that Samuel the seer and Saul the son of Kish, and Abner the son of Ner, and Joab the son of Zeruiah dedicated"; see also 1 Chron. 9. 22. And in 1 Sam. 9. 9, 11, 18, 19, this is the title given to him, he is "the seer." Not only so, but further, at *v.* 9, there is an instructive statement: "Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, thus he said, Come and let us go to the seer;" the definite article being used in the Hebrew text as it is in the translation. Occasionally there were "men of God" who saw things revealed to them by Him, things which were therefore called "visions," and the two Hebrew words being as closely connected as possible, these men who saw visions were called "Seers."\* But now,

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\* Professor H. P. Smith, from whose opinions I am often compelled strongly to dissent, says in his commentary on this passage that "the rarity of the word led a scribe to insert this verse as an explanation, which, however, has fallen into the wrong place; it belongs after *ver.* 11. The conception of the prophet which it betrays is that of a *clairvoyant* to whom one may come for the discovery of lost articles." I trust that it is not necessary for me to discuss this with him.

when the stream of prophecy was to flow on unbroken, and prophets in a continuous or uninterrupted line were to take a prominent place in the history of Israel, it became natural to restrict the use of the title "prophet" to those who held an official position, and asked acknowledgment of their call to it, dedicating themselves entirely to the work, and taking on themselves all the responsibility of the office. Correspondingly, the old title "seer" would come to be restricted to those who, from whatever cause, though they had visions from God, yet did not in consequence of these take office in the Jewish Church or Theocracy, but continued to be private persons, or, it may be, to hold another office, such as that of judge or king. Their occasional visions were as reliable as those of the prophets strictly so called, but the men themselves did not assume the full responsibility which lay upon these prophets. This distinction between the two titles furnishes a happy explanation of Isai. 29. 10, R.V., according to a punctuation which has much to recommend it: "For Jehovah hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes, the prophets; and your heads, the seers, hath he covered." Compare his distinction between simple seeing by the seers and moral training by the prophets (Isai. 30. 10). The eyes of the body politic were the prophets, whose very function and office was to see and to give guidance to kings and people. Others might be called seers, for they saw occasionally; but if one spoke of their office, this was a different though a related function: they were in some other respects heads of God's people.\*

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\* Nevertheless the precise usage of language is sometimes difficult to settle by etymology. In this case there are two Hebrew verbs whose participles are applied as descriptive of men who saw the things of God. The participle here is the less used of the two, though, strange to say, it belongs to the common verb for seeing. The other verb is much rarer, and it is a good deal employed in the sense of the spiritual seeing; so that this application of its participle is not surprising. It would be out of place here to go into a discussion of the mutual relations of these two participles.



It is not necessary to discuss the position of "the sons of the prophets" in relation to "the companies of the prophets," or "bands of the prophets," at the head of whom Saul and his messengers saw Samuel standing (chap. 19. 18-24), in his city of Ramah, at a place called Naioth, perhaps meaning "homesteads." The circumstances were so vividly influential upon Saul, even in his degenerate days, that they recalled to the minds of men the influence which these prophets had exerted on him at first and when he was at his best (chap. 10. 12). From these bands or companies of the prophets, men under tuition for holy services, if Jehovah were pleased to accept of them, may have sprung two men, Gad and Nathan, who appear repeatedly in the history of David; nay, David himself had been much under the influence of Samuel. They may all three have been pupils of that great seer. We read of "the prophet Gad" (chap. 22. 5), of whom, perhaps, the more precise description is given at 2 Sam. 24. 11, "the prophet Gad, David's seer." And as David fled from Absalom, he said to Zadok, to whose family, of the lineage of Aaron's elder son Eleazar, the high priesthood had somehow returned, "Art not thou a seer?" (2 Sam. 15. 27).\* Besides these, Heman the son of Samuel, one of the three Levitical heads of the music in the sanctuary, as David established it, receives the title of "the king's seer in the words of God" (1 Chron. 25. 5).

This case of Heman points to another peculiarity in the prophetic office, as it assumed a more fixed and regular form under Samuel, namely, its close alliance with poetry and music. From his childhood Samuel had been under the careful religious training of his mother, to whom we are indebted for a glorious prophecy which is commonly called the Song of Hannah. It

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\* In these two passages the two different participles are employed.

has already been observed that other godly women had left her a legacy of sacred song : there is the song of Deborah ; and Miriam had her share in the Song of Moses at the Red Sea, while correspondingly there is the divine testimony regarding her prophetic character : " I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam " (Micah 6. 4). Now Miriam had herself linked music to sacred song. For, according to Exod. 15. 20, 21, when Moses and the children of Israel were singing, " Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand ; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to Jehovah," etc. Deborah's song was sung by herself and Barak. Samuel had his band or bands of prophets : at his parting with Saul after their first meeting, he said (chap. 10. 5, 6), " Thou shalt meet a band of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery and a timbrel and a pipe and a harp, before thee ; and they shall be prophesying. And the spirit of Jehovah will come mightily upon thee and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man." Samuel was led to know the place of music in the sanctuary and its worship. Of this there had been only the scantiest recognition in the tabernacle of Moses, nothing but the trumpets blown by the priests. From Samuel's time its power was felt, and its position was assured. David had learned to play well upon the harp, and he used his musical skill to soothe and to recover Saul, as often as he suffered from the assaults of the evil spirit. Saul's servants may or may not have thought of spiritual benefits, but we may be sure that they were familiar with the mind of him who in his latest composition described himself as " the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel ; the Spirit of Jehovah spake by me, and His word was upon my tongue " (2 Sam. 23. 1, 2).\*

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\* A later example of the union of prophecy with music is given in 2 Kings 3. 14, 15. See also Isai. 30. 29.

And then, "David set over the service of song in the house of Jehovah, after that the ark had rest," this Heman the son of Samuel (1 Chron. 6. 31-38). More precisely, while David asked that this appointment should be made, it was really the appointment of the Levites themselves (1 Chron. 15. 16-19). It was these families, of which Heman's was one, whom David and the captains of the house separated for the service of God, who should prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals, etc. (1 Chron. 25. 1-8).\*

It is instructive to observe the prominence assigned to music in the accounts of the revival of religion in the reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah, confirmatory as these are of the parallel account of the great period of renewed and abundant grace in the age of Samuel and David. (See Note C at the end.)

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\* Many statements about these songs in the worship of the tabernacle and the temple may be examined in passages such as 2 Sam. 6. 5; 1 Chron. 15. 16-28; 2 Chron. 20. 18-28; 29. 14, 25-30; 35. 15; Ezra 2. 41; 10. 24; Neh. 10. 28, 39; 11. 22, 23; 21. 24, 27-42, 45-47; 13. 5, 10. Compare also Am. 6. 5; 8. 3. The new critical position dissociates David from the Psalms, many if not most of which used to be connected with him and the services of Solomon's temple. I cannot but suspect that this unnatural severance has been forced upon the critics by the exigencies of their general hypothesis.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE PRIESTLY WORK OF SAMUEL.

SAMUEL'S childhood was spent at Shiloh, where the tabernacle of Moses had been pitched by Joshua, and where there is no reason to doubt that it had remained till Samuel's time. His upbringing from the first had been with Eli the high priest, under the bright shadow of the tabernacle worship, whose centre was the ark. Samuel's associations had been with priestly persons and priestly offices and occupations. Alas! he had been also familiar with the horrible profaneness and evil life of Eli's sons, and with the contempt for the offering of Jehovah, and disgust at it, which were in consequence the feelings prevailing among the people of Israel, even while they yielded outward obedience to the requirements of the Law and came to worship at Shiloh.

A new scene opens with the Philistine war. In the course of it the judgments which the unnamed prophet had foretold as about to fall upon Eli's house began to be executed; or, if they began earlier, they were now being executed with startling energy and completeness. This section of the history is peculiarly full of the ark. It had been named "The ark of God" in the account of Samuel's call, chap. 3. 3: so it is again, chaps. 4. 11, 13, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22; 5. 1, 2, 10 (twice); 14. 18 (twice); and also "The ark of the God of Israel," chaps. 5. 7, 8 (twice), 10, 11; 6. 3; and "The ark of Jehovah," chaps. 4. 6; 5. 3, 4; 6. 1, 2, 8, 11, 15, 18, 19, 21; 7. 1 (twice). More fully it is designated "The ark of the covenant of God," at the end of chap. 4. 4, and "The ark of the covenant of

Jehovah," chap. 4. 3, 5; and fullest of all, in the first half of chap. 4. 4, "The ark of the covenant of Jehovah of hosts, which sitteth upon," or, "dwelleth between, the cherubim." In contrast with these there is also the shortest possible designation, "The ark," chaps. 6. 13; 7. 2. Without discussing the different shades of thought conveyed or suggested by these different names, it may safely be affirmed that the frequency with which the ark is mentioned, as well as those variations in the name, indicate how familiar the thought of it was to every godly Israelite, and how rich were the associations connected with it. Perhaps the prominence assigned to it in these chapters is also indicative that Jehovah was arising out of His holy habitation and showing Himself as the living holy God among His people, who had sunk in corruption, indifference, and unbelief, amid the multiplicity of formal heartless services before the ark in its usual place. Compare the words of Moses and the experience of Israel, Num. 10. 35, 36.

This ark, familiar to the mind of every Israelite as the unseen centre of that worship by the Twelve Tribes as a unit, the people of Jehovah, to which there is repeated reference in chaps. 1—3, had become the object of trust to the formal worshippers, all the more so on account of the traditions and habits which had gathered round Shiloh from the days of the conquest of the land by Joshua, and its allotment among the tribes by him and his coadjutors. The superstitious trust in the ark by the Israelites was equalled by the superstitious terror felt before it by the Philistines. It is not clear on which side the war had begun; yet the form of the verb in Hebrew (chap. 4. 1) gives no reason for inferring that the Philistines pitched in Aphek in consequence of the Israelites going out against them and pitching in a place to which at a later time Samuel gave the name of Eben-ezer. The bloody defeat of the Israelites at the beginning of the campaign induced them to

send to Shiloh for the ark, that it, forsooth, might save them. This was the pitiful expedient to which they had recourse when they had put to themselves the question, Wherefore hath Jehovah smitten us down before the Philistines? They might well have been suspicious of leaders who probed their case in so shallow a manner, and provided such slight healing for their hurt; see Jer. 8. 11. All the more they might have been brought to doubt the efficacy of their remedy, when they saw the ark of the covenant of Jehovah, coming from its place under the cherubim, guided by the two worthless sons of Eli. But in the conduct of the people there is no trace of doubt or questioning. As it came into the camp all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again. And the terror of the Philistines was equally manifest; for they said, "God is come into the camp. . . . Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore. . . . These are the gods that smote the Egyptians with all manner of plagues in the wilderness." In some respects one might compare this moving of the ark with the moving of the pillar of cloud and fire at the crossing of the Red Sea, and its effects upon the Israelites and the Egyptians (Exod. 14. 19, 20, 25). Only the Philistines seem bolder than the Egyptians; for in their very despair they encouraged one another to fight like men. This led to the catastrophe in the camp of Israel—to a defeat enormously more bloody than the former one—to the death of the two priests, the sons of Eli, and to the capture of the ark itself. Then followed the sudden death of Eli, as he heard the appalling tidings, and the execution of the judgments which had been foretold to him.

After these disasters it might seem a small matter that Eli's daughter-in-law died as soon as she had borne her child, not improbably on the same day. This woman, however, saw deep into the meaning and importance of this calamity. She saw the destruction of what had become a fetich to Israel. She

refused all comfort. With her dying words she named her boy Ichabod, that is, "There is no glory." She said (translating literally), "The glory is gone into exile from Israel"; because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father-in-law and her husband. The sacred writer does not enable his readers to decide whether it was her spiritual insight or her womanly discernment, but one or other had taken in the situation; in describing it by giving this name to the child, she pronounced a verdict in accordance with what is written in Psalm 78. 59-69. Two generations passed away before all this was accomplished. And Samuel was the man chosen by God to guide Israel through the rapids of this revolution, civil as well as ecclesiastical, which came on Israel suddenly at the last, as is often the case with revolutions. Before the crisis came, "all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of Jehovah" (chap. 3. 20). And thus it occurred that there re-appeared in Samuel what had been seen in Moses when the initial great movement called Israel into being as a church and nation. For "by a prophet Jehovah brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved" (Hos. 12. 13).\*

It is unnecessary to go minutely into the details given of the history of the ark while in exile in the land of the Philistines. It was carried first to Ashdod, perhaps as that one of their five cities which was nearest to the field of battle. There it was placed in the house of their god Dagon. So when the captive judge Samson had had his eyes put out, and in another of their cities he had been brought to make sport to the assembled Philistines, their rejoicings took place in the

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\* Moses had to be rejected by his brethren, and to be a sojourner in Midian forty years, before he brought them deliverance. The popularity of our Lord's ministry needed, even in His case, to be followed by the winnowing and sifting recorded in John 6. Samuel's early popularity seems to have been followed by a similar trying time ere he became the deliverer of Israel.

house of Dagon, where they were assembled to offer him a great sacrifice, and to praise him for delivering their enemy into their hand. In both instances, however, it turned to Dagon's dishonour; yet with the ark the more marvellously, because no human instrumentality intervened between the ark and the idol. The people of Ashdod had been also smitten with disease. Thus they were led to acknowledge that they dared not detain the ark of the God of Israel; and not knowing what else to do with it, they sent it to the neighbouring city of Gath, renowned for its race of giants. The same experience occurred here, and the men of Gath sent it on to Ekron. The men of Ekron suffered as the two others had suffered; however, they seem to have cried out before they were hurt. Nothing is said of the two southern cities; it may be that they positively refused to let the ark come to them. At all events, the whole of the lords of the Philistines were gathered together, and they resolved to send it away, and to let it go again to its own place. It had been in the country of the Philistines seven months.

This sending of the ark home by the official act of the Philistines at the instance of their priests and their diviners, whom they had consulted, in a new cart drawn by two milk cows who had never drawn in a yoke, with a guilt offering (in the A.V. trespass offering) on account of the judgments which had made them miserable, was accompanied by the severest possible test which could be applied to distinguish whether it had really been the hand of Jehovah upon them, or whether it had been a mere chance. Without regarding their calves taken from them and shut up at home, the milk cows, immediately and without wandering or stopping, went away straight along the high road to Beth-shemesh, apparently the first town which they reached within the land of Israel. The cart came into the field of Joshua the Beth-shemite, and stood there at a



spot where there was a great stone. Every one, Philistine and Israelite, saw how complete was the vindication of the glory of the God of Israel, which had been stained by the captivity of His ark. For the lords of the Philistines had gone after the two cows even to the border of Beth-shemesh; and only after having watched everything that happened did they return the same day to Ekron, from which they had set out.

There have been many difficulties suggested by commentators upon the narrative in chap. 6. 13-16, and in order to remove these, various conjectural changes of the text have been proposed. In reality no difficulty need be felt. The inhabitants of Beth-shemesh were Israelites. The sequence of events expressed by continuous tenses of the Hebrew verbs which had told of the cart, the cattle, and the lords of the Philistines, is interrupted by two participles in *vv.* 12, 13, which tell how the Beth-shemites were occupied at the same time that those lords followed the cows in the cart: they were reaping their wheat harvest; and how they saw the ark coming in among them and rejoiced. At *v.* 14 the Hebrew makes another break in the continuous tenses. This break is often rendered by our pluperfect, and it might very well be so here: "And as for the cart, it had come into the field of Joshua the Beth-shemite, and it stood there," etc. The reason of this break is that the account of the cart and the lords of the Philistines is resumed in order to tell the point to which the cart came, namely, the field of one of the men of the Israelite town, and it stood there just where there was a great stone. The lords had looked on, watching narrowly the movements of the cows, yet in no respect interfering with them, for this was the spirit of their instructions from their priests and their diviners. When the cart stopped, this was the act of the cows themselves. We believe that in reality it was Jehovah who guided the movements of those animals, and in this way indicated when and

where His ark was to rest on its return from exile. The lords of the Philistines accepted the intimation, hoping that they were no longer to have His hand lying heavy upon them. There was a great stone where the cows stood still, and the lords seem to have interpreted this circumstance (though it is not expressly so said) as an intimation of the divine will that they should make an altar of it. They therefore clave the wood of the cart, and offered up the two cows as a burnt-offering to Jehovah.

But did the lords of the Philistines venture to take down the ark from the cart, and to place it on the stone? We have no reason to think that they did: for an altar was not a peculiarly suitable resting place for the ark. Besides, a new break is made in the sequence of the continuous tenses at *v.* 15, as our printers might do by making a new paragraph; or, more unmistakably, though at the expense of making the English sentence heavy, we might use the pluperfect, as already proposed at *v.* 13. Thus, "And as for the Levites, they had taken down the ark of Jehovah, and the coffer . . . . and put them on the great stone; and as for the men of Beth-shemesh, they had offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices," etc. It was the Levites, not the Philistines, who had taken down the ark and the coffer containing the Philistine guilt offering, and had laid these on the great stone, on which probably by this time the Philistine burnt offering had been offered up.

But these Levites—nothing up till now had been said of them—where had they come from? The answer is very simple to any one who knows the circumstances. Every Israelite was familiar with the fact that Beth-shemesh was one of the Levitical cities (*Josh.* 21. 16). This fact would add to the joy of the people as they saw the ark coming home again to the land of Israel, that these cows had been somehow guided to bring it to the city which lay nearest and most convenient on the way

home from Ekron, and this a city in which some of the ministers of the house of Jehovah resided. Manifestly it was not enough that the Philistines had sacrificed the cows for a burnt-offering to Jehovah. It might be enough for those heathen who had restored the ark under compulsion. But it was not enough for His own people, who indeed would scarcely have offered burnt offerings of that which cost them nothing, namely, the cattle of these Philistines. See how David expresses this principle (2 Sam. 24. 24). Nor would any devout Israelite have offered cows as a burnt-offering—a burnt offering was invariably a male (Lev. 1. 3, 10, etc.). No; the Israelites would offer their own burnt offerings, and along with these would sacrifice sacrifices, that is, peace offerings, according to their common practice of combining these two classes of sacrifice in a service of which we read nothing among the Philistines; contrast the two services as described in *vv.* 14, 15. The Hebrew tenses do not suggest that the offering of the burnt-offerings and sacrifices was the consequence of the Levites taking down the ark and the coffer and putting them on the stone. It may have come after what the Levites did, yet it may have at least commenced before that taking down, such was the eager joy of the Israelites. But whatever was the order of time, the Hebrew original presents the two actions as independent of one another. Nor are the actors on the two occasions precisely the same. It was the Levites who took down the ark, whereas it was the men of Beth-shemesh who brought the sacrifice. A Levitical city was a city placed at the disposal of the Levites, but it was by no means necessarily inhabited by Levites exclusively. There might be, there is no reason for doubting that there were, inhabitants of Beth-shemesh who were not Levites; and it was the citizens *en masse* who united in offering these sacrifices. Not only so, they may have invited people from other cities to join them on this

day of gladness in Israel, a supposition of which more has yet to be said. There seems no use in asking a question the answer to which must remain unknown, namely, Who acted as priest on this occasion? It might naturally enough be some one of the priestly family who had served at Shiloh, and who hastened to this Levitical city to meet the ark on its return. Nothing is said of him, as if his personality was a matter of quite subordinate importance.

Finally, at *v.* 16, there is another change in the persons who are the subjects of the first verb, and there is another break in the sequence of the narrative as expressed by the tense being thrown out of consecution. One might try to present this to the English reader thus: "And as for the five lords of the Philistines, they saw it, and they returned to Ekron the same day," a journey of some twelve miles. They quickly had seen enough to convince them that the exile of the ark was at an end, and that Israel joyously welcomed it home again. In short, both Philistines and Israelites recognised that this was Jehovah's doing, and that it was marvellous in their eyes; compare Psalm 118. 23. The lords themselves returned, but they left their guilt offering behind them at Beth-shemesh (*vv.* 17, 18).\*

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\* It has generally been supposed that there is an error of the scribes in *v.* 18, where *eben*, the common Hebrew word for *stone*, occurring here at *vv.* 14, 15, is substituted, by conjecture, for the Hebrew text, which is *abel*. This is done, for instance, in the R.V., with a marginal note that this is the reading of our two oldest translations. The A.V. practically reaches the same result by treating *Abel* as a proper name and supplying *stone* in italic type. This proceeding is liable to serious question. The R.V. margin says that in Hebrew *abel* is a *meadow*. The ark had come up from the well-known "low country," the home of the Philistines. Now it reached the beginnings of the "hill country of Judah." The last of the Philistine flat land would meet the first of the hills of Judah, in that extended meadow on the edge of which Beth-shemesh stood. At this point the ark passed into the territory of Israel from the Philistine territory which had furnished the guilt offering of five golden tumours and five golden mice "according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both of fenced cities and of country villages, even unto the great meadow, whereon they set down the ark of Jehovah." And the end of *v.* 18 may be better translated, without any difficulty, and without the use of the italic words in the two English versions,

The men of Beth-shemesh had manifested great joy as they received the ark, which had been brought back by the spontaneous act of the Philistines. It may even be a probable inference from the narrative that they had invited their neighbours in the land of Israel, and that these came in numbers to join in the demonstrations of delight and thankfulness to God. Or it might well be that their countrymen around had gathered in numbers of their own accord. For there can be little doubt that the Israelites had eagerly watched the course of events since the ark had been carried away, and knew perfectly of the repeated discomfiture of the Philistines and the disgrace of their idol Dagon, and of their resolution to send it home with a national acknowledgment of their guilt. The very date of the singular procession would be as well known to the Israelites as to the Philistines. That is to say, they knew that Ekron was the starting point, and they also knew the road which the lie of the country made it almost certain that the cattle would take. And though no one knew how far those cattle would carry the ark, they might feel assured that it would not stop short of Beth-shemesh, where first it would stand on Israelite soil. And the home-coming of the ark was a momentous interference by Jehovah on behalf of His people,

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“even unto the great meadow whereon they set down the ark of Jehovah, unto this day, in the field of Joshua the Beth-shemite,” of which field mention had been made in *v.* 14. The whole wide meadow did not belong to a single proprietor, but in one part of it, known as the field of Joshua, they left, or laid down, or set up the ark; for in all these and in other ways is the Hebrew verb translated in the A.V. The coffer and the golden contents are never afterwards mentioned. If they had been laid in the ark, or beside it, to accompany it in its future movements, notice might naturally have been taken of them in some subsequent history. If the men of Beth-shemesh claimed a right to keep them in charge for all Israel, even when a subsequent disaster led them to send away the ark, this suggests a good sense for the information conveyed in *vv.* 17, 18; those precious things “the Philistines returned for a guilt offering unto Jehovah. . . unto this day in the field of Joshua the Beth-shemite.” The English reader may also be told that there is no resemblance or connexion between this verb in *v.* 18 and the verbs in *v.* 15, translated *took down* and *put them on*, so that there is the less reason for imagining a scribe’s blunder, with the intention of identifying the *abel* in which the ark was left with the *eben* or *aben* on which it was put.

not only from a civil but also from a religious point of view ; for the whole circle of the Jewish feasts (that is, the trysts or appointed gatherings of the holy nation at the tabernacle) spread over the year, though somewhat unequally distributed. The Passover was observed in the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month ; with this was inseparably connected the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which followed immediately after, for seven days. Counting from “the morrow after the Sabbath” in this week of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, on the fiftieth day (in Greek, Pentecost) came the Feast of Weeks, called also the Feast of the First-fruits of Harvest. Finally came the Feast of Tabernacles, more accurately, of Booths, when all the produce of the soil had been gathered in ; it began on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, and it lasted seven days, or eight, if one included the closing festival on the eighth day. As the men of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest they lifted up their eyes and saw the ark ; so that it could not but be very near the time of the Feast of Weeks, which might be either just over or just coming on, the Passover having preceded it by fifty days ; five months before that had been the Feast of Tabernacles. One has no right to assert what the children of Israel did in the matter of public worship during the seven months in which the ark was in the hands of the Philistines ; that is, on the first occasion, since their civil and spiritual polity had been set up, on which the ark of Jehovah was not in the midst of them to be the glory and defence of their services. They may justly have reckoned the exile of the ark as a part of what Psalm 78. 60 describes as Jehovah forsaking the tabernacle of Shiloh—the tent which He placed among men. They may, in consequence of this calamity, have suspended all those highest and happiest acts of public worship. Yet, even if they kept them up, how poor and spiritless they must have

been ! Then came the outburst of enthusiastic joy, proceeding from a circle of country whose extent we can do no more than guess. It is not for us to affirm with confidence that their joyful celebration of the ark's return was intermingled with their observance of the Feast of Weeks : but we do affirm that they were at or near the same time.

One thing, however, is certain. Their gladness at its return was ill regulated, and their rejoicings were quickly changed into passionate wailings. The same fleshly confidence which had brought the ark from Shiloh into the camp, in the vain expectation of securing that the battlefield should become a field of victory, was still working in their minds, and leading them to make the material presence of the ark their joy and satisfaction. They "looked into the ark," or as the words may also be translated, and many now prefer this translation, they "gazed upon" it, as the heathen Philistines might have done when it came into their possession. And Jehovah smote the people with a great slaughter, compelling them once more to turn their feast into a Bochim. For at least the Levites of Beth-shemesh ought to have remembered the stress laid upon the veneration due to the ark and its furniture, when directions such as the following, among others, had been given for the movements as Israel journeyed through the wilderness : "And Jehovah spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, Cut ye not off the tribe of the family of the Kohathites from among the Levites. But thus do unto them, that they may live and not die, when they approach unto the most holy things. Aaron and his sons shall go in, and appoint them every one to his service and to his burden : but they shall not go in to see the sanctuary even for a moment, lest they die" (Num. 4. 17-20). It makes no difference, for our purpose, if we adhere to the A.V. in the closing words, "to see when the holy things are covered, lest

they die." Compare also the instructions in Exod. 19. 21 ; 33. 20-23.\*

Generally a difficulty has been felt about the numbers in the Hebrew text, where we read that because they had looked into the ark, Jehovah "smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men," as in the A.V., or with great precision in the R.V., "smote of the people seventy men [and] fifty thousand men." Nor need it stumble any one if he be led to think that errors have been made in transcription of certain numbers. The meaning and the lesson of this history remain the same, even should the number slain be only seventy, the fifty thousand having slipped in by mistake. Yet, let it be well understood that this is nothing more than a supposition. The oldest and most interesting of the ancient versions, the Septuagint Greek, presents in the text of Samuel a large array of differences, not many of them very interesting to the ordinary reader. In this passage it retains the startling number unchanged ; it does, however, present a

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\* Professor H. P. Smith comments thus : " There is, however, no other indication that this author thought it sinful to look upon the ark. Had he thought so, he would have shown what precautions were taken by the Israelites before the battle to prevent this profanation, and would for this cause have aggravated the plague sent upon the Philistines." Such a way of recording events is suitable for a skilful novelist rather than for a faithful historian, not to say a writer who was a prophet of the God of truth. But besides, there is a vast difference between those heathen Philistines and the well-instructed Israelites, particularly the Levites, who had special instructions how they were to act in this very matter. In accordance with this line of thought, we read that the Philistines brought back the ark in a new cart ; and there is no evidence that, in doing so, they came short of what their own consciences might have led them to do in this matter, nor of dissatisfaction on the part of Jehovah with this procedure of theirs. On the other hand, it is written in 2 Sam. 6. 3-13, that when David arranged for bringing up the ark from Kirjath-jearim to Jerusalem, on the first occasion he set it in a new cart, and by the calamity which suddenly came upon him he learned how much Jehovah was displeased with this unhallowed familiarity ; so that when he arranged the second time, he gave the ark in charge to the rightful persons, " they that bare " it. For our Lord insists upon the great principle, " That servant which knew his Lord's will, and made not ready nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes : but he that knew not and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes " ( Luke 12. 47, 48 ). I do not wonder that Professor Smith, apparently not taking this into account, should add, from his point of view, " the anger of Yahveh was not always easy to account for. "



remarkably different reading (not in the numbers), which some students reckon to be helpful, but which surely makes the whole statement more difficult. It is given to the English reader in the margin of the R.V. The R.V. in its text aims at giving the Hebrew as exactly as possible, only it tries to soften the translation by inserting an italic "and" between "seventy men" and "fifty thousand men"; the A.V. had inserted "and" without marking it as an insertion. Can there be a more literal rendering of the Hebrew text than this? "He smote among the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked into" (otherwise translated, "had gazed upon") "the ark of Jehovah; so He smote among the people seventy men, fifty thousand men." There are two bodies of men here mentioned, and apparently carefully distinguished all through *vs.* 19, 20; namely, the men of Beth-shemesh, and a larger body, "the people," who can be no other than Israelites not exclusively men of Beth-shemesh, but most of them gathered from places beyond for the purpose of welcoming the ark on its return. These "people," who had come to rejoice, and remained to mourn because Jehovah had smitten the people with a great slaughter, are said to have amounted to fifty thousand, a great assembly, yet not more than might be expected in the circumstances. The men of the Levitical city of Beth-shemesh, with whom the ark had come to rest, were the most guilty, and the text says it was among them that Jehovah smote the seventy; a large number in itself, which might all the more be mourned for as a great slaughter, if every one of them belonged to that single country town. Compare the eighty-five priests of Nob slaughtered by Saul (*chap.* 22. 18); and also the seventy in the slaughter by the command of God in the vision (*Ezek.* 8. 11; 9. 5, 6).

The men of Beth-shemesh had learned a needed lesson, which this judgment was meant to enforce, namely, the holiness

of Jehovah, in contrast to gross material fancies to which they might again be yielding themselves; see Josh. 24. 19. Yet they had learned it only thus far, that they were little in advance of the Philistines, who had felt the stroke upon themselves and had seen it on their idol. As the dangerous ark came to one after another of the Philistine cities, their sole object had been to get it away from them before it wrought more mischief. The questions of the Beth-shemites were "Who is able to stand before Jehovah? And to whom shall He go up from us?" It was just what those Philistines had said. Yet the Beth-shemites are not to be unsparingly condemned on account of their terror at the presence of "this holy God." Their exclamation is like that of the apostle Peter, when he received his earlier call, after the miraculous draught of fishes (Luke 5. 8): "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

Beth-shemesh lay in an angle at or near the meeting point of three tribes, Dan, Judah, and Benjamin, and not far from Ephraim. The Beth-shemites sent up along the confines of the hill country, to Kirjath-jearim, still not far from the frontiers of these tribes, though unquestionably within the territory of Judah; see Josh. 15. 60; 18. 14, 15; Judg. 18. 12. They begged its inhabitants to come down and fetch away the ark. To appreciate the meaning and force of their application to the men of Kirjath-jearim, it must be remembered that this city was one of the four cities of the Gibeonites (Josh. 9. 17). That chapter gives the account of the Gibeonites' singular stratagem for entrapping Joshua and the host of Israel into an alliance, by which their lives were spared, while the rest of the Canaanites went forward to destruction. The Gibeonites were successful to this extent, that they saved their lives: but they paid a heavy price, for they came under a curse, and they were reduced to the position of temple slaves. Joshua made

them that day "hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of Jehovah, unto this day, in the place which He should choose." The application to the men of Kirjath-jearim by these men of Beth-shemesh, a Levitical city, was therefore really a command imposed upon those men who were bound down to servitude to the house of Jehovah, wherever its service might be.\*

The Levites of Beth-shemesh in this way escaped from the danger which they apprehended: for if anything not rightly done with the ark should bring down the judgment of Jehovah, the loss would come, not on the house of Israel, but on those accursed (Josh. 9. 23) temple slaves.

We have no sources of knowledge from which to supplement the information given briefly in chap. 7. 1. What is essential to the student of the history for the purposes which

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\* It is of little use to inquire why the men of Kirjath-jearim, rather than those of another of the Gibeonite cities, should have been summoned to take care of the ark. The language of the Book of Joshua suggests that these four cities lay near one another; and this suggestion is confirmed by the researches of geography. Kirjath-jearim may have been the nearest and the most convenient for the purpose of the Beth-shemites. Besides, historical circumstances might easily be conceived, in which this selection was natural. For instance, Kirjath-jearim was also called *Kirjath-baal* (Josh. 15. 60), *Baale-Judah* (2 Sam. 6. 2), and *Baalath* (1 Chron. 13. 6). These names point to some old connexion of the city with Baal; and the presence of the ark there may have been deemed desirable in the then unsettled condition of Israel, in order to counterbalance some tendencies toward Baal-worship, and to uphold the honour and conserve the worship of Jehovah, at the place to which His ark had come back from exile. There is no reason to surmise that Kirjath-jearim had ceased to be a Gibeonite city. Joshua had made a league that the four cities should be spared, and had deliberately refused to permit any infraction of the treaty, while confessing that he and their princes had done wrong in making it. It was in the last part of the reign of Saul, in days polluted by treachery and bloodshed, that he attempted to destroy the Gibeonites in his misdirected and unhallowed zeal for the children of Israel and Judah (2 Sam. 21. 1-6), with bitter consequences to himself and his family. The notice in 2 Sam. 4. 2, 3, which has puzzled some who did not know how to make use of it, tells how another of these four Gibeonite cities, Beeroth, had come to be reckoned to Benjamin, within whose territory it lay, while the Beerothites had been compelled to fly for their lives and become "sojourners"; and the two captains of bands under Saul's successor are called Benjamites, yet also Beerothites, no doubt because they had been of those who under Saul had pillaged and murdered the Gibeonites. By their evil acts these men were shaping their own character, till at length they murdered their feeble king.

it is meant to serve is told in a sentence. The men of Kirjath-jearim at once obeyed the summons, as in duty bound. They fetched up the ark, no doubt on men's shoulders: indeed the lie of the country might be less favourable for the use of a cart. And they provided a man in whose house it might safely and properly remain. The absence of the Hebrew tense for continued narration perhaps favours the opinion that they had looked out his son as a suitable person to be sanctified to keep it. These things may be thought over and looked at in the light thrown on them by a parallel proceeding, when David, terrified by the judgment on Uzzah for putting forth his hand to the ark, carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. Indeed, David may have taken this account of the conduct of the Beth-shemites as a precedent.

The stay of the ark in this Gibeonite city came to be protracted; though the form of the Hebrew in chap. 7. 2 does not suggest that this long stay was of deliberate intention. Perhaps the Hebrew might be paraphrased slightly thus, "And it came to pass from the day that the ark dwelt in Kirjath-jearim the time grew to be long, it came to be twenty years." The explanation is probably contained in the following clause; "and all the house of Israel lamented after Jehovah." The Hebrew verb is somewhat rare: it and its cognate nouns denote mourning for the dead, or at least a mourning approaching to this in character. Here it may indicate a deep universal mourning, which took and held possession of the people of Israel. For thus a similar emotion, violent, yet very pure, the direct work of the Spirit of grace and supplication poured out on the people, is described in Zech. 12. 10—13. 1. Samuel is not named till the next verse; but the whole account brings him vividly before our minds. Besides Samuel there was no one who could be imagined as keeping the people for twenty years in this humble, penitent frame of mind, and diffusing the

influence of the revival so that "all the house of Israel" were embraced within its sweep. For *v. 3* does name him, and re-asserts this characteristic of the movement, that it was "all the house of Israel" who were addressed and influenced by him. This at once recalls the marvellous description of Samuel at the end of chap. 3, with whom Jehovah was, not letting any of his words fall to the ground, making all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba know that he was established to be a prophet of Jehovah, and securing that his word should come to all Israel. The culmination of the effects of the wickedness of Eli's sons had been reached in the fleshly confidence with which the people regarded the ark and its priests as a pledge of divine protection and of victory. That false confidence had been shattered, and the thoughts of the people had been turned inward to their own sin, and upward to the holiness of the God of their fathers, with whom they had to do, by the catastrophe which ruined the fortunes of the state, interrupted their public worship, destroyed their priesthood (for there would be many priests besides Eli's sons who fell among the 30,000), and let the ark itself pass into the hands of the Philistines. Then came the returning grace of God which broke the power of the blasphemous enemy and restored the ark to Israel, yet not without a new lesson that this ark would not prove a protection, but, on the contrary, a cause of terror and death to a worldly body of professing worshippers. The lesson, however, had been only half learned by those who very nearly sent the ark into a new exile by their mingled presumption and faint-heartedness at Beth-shemesh.

This was Samuel's opportunity. Shiloh was desolate. The priesthood had collapsed, perhaps had disappeared in despair, and the ark was left neglected to stand aside in an obscure Gibeonite town, the people of Israel apparently feeling persuaded that they were not in circumstances to have any-

thing to do with it. Their feelings might be expressed in the language of the people to Moses after the awe-inspiring deaths of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and their associates (Num. 17. 12, 13): "Behold, we perish, we are undone, we are all undone. Every one that cometh near, that cometh near to the tabernacle of Jehovah dieth; shall we perish all of us?" This indeed was Samuel's opportunity, and he had no wish to precipitate the issue, or to do his prophetic work in a superficial and slovenly manner. Twenty years gave time for even those who had been born in the year of the fatal battle, and who had never seen the ark at Shiloh in the midst of the assembled worshippers, namely, "all the house of Israel," to grow up to that age at which they were reckoned by Hebrew law and custom to be full-grown men, able to assume all civil privileges, and to go out to war.\*

Nothing is recorded of the particulars of Samuel's labours among "all the house of Israel." But the unmistakable issue of what he had been doing was his hopeful invitation to them to give full proof that with all their heart they were returning to Jehovah. This proof would consist, on the one hand, in putting away all the idolatrous practices which were inconsistent with their profession that they were His; on the other hand, in serving Him only with prepared hearts. In this case Samuel assured them that their experience should be a repetition of the experience of their fathers in the age of the Judges—Jehovah would deliver them out of the hand of the Philistines. It is added emphatically (*v.* 4) that the children of Israel did put away the Baalim and the Ashtaroth, and that they served Jehovah only.

The eye of Samuel—this prophet of Jehovah established in Israel—saw that the hour of deliverance had come. In order

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\* See this age of twenty years in connexion with a census or a military expedition in cases such as at Lev. 27. 3, 5; Num. 1. 3, 18, 20; 14. 29; 26. 2, 4; 1 Chron. 23. 24, 27.

to secure this, two events must occur : there needed to be the action of all Israel gathering to some appointed place, and the action of Samuel praying in their behalf (*v.* 5).\*

Of the place of meeting, Mizpah (*vv.* 5, 6, 7, 11, 12), more will yet be said when it is named along with certain other places in *vv.* 16 and 17. Accordingly, the children of Israel did gather together and humbled themselves and made confession of their sinning against Jehovah. Two outward actions are mentioned in connexion with their spiritual exercises : they fasted, and they poured out water. (1) They fasted, as in a similar case, *Judg.* 20. 26. Fasting seems to be a practice natural to mankind in such circumstances. It is not expressly commanded in the Law of Moses, and yet it came to be more and more regarded as the appropriate outward emblem of the inward "afflicting of their souls," a duty to which they were specially called year by year on the Day of Atonement (*Lev.* 23. 27, etc). So much was this the case, that in later times this day was actually called "The fast" (*Acts* 27. 9). (2) They drew water and poured it out before Jehovah. Of this act of worship there is no other example unless it be partly in the prophecy *Isai.* 12. 3, where the joyous drawing of water does not necessarily exclude the exercise of penitence.† Compare *v.* 1.

\* There are several Hebrew prepositions which are translated by our "for"; as in *praying for, offering sacrifice for, etc.* The preposition used with prayer here in *vv.* 5 and 9, is very far from being the most common; its use rather indicates some special definiteness or emphasis. It might, perhaps, be uniformly translated "on behalf of": so it is combined repeatedly with the verb for *making atonement* on the day of atonement (*Lev.* 16. 6, 17, 24; but not in verses 10, 16, 18, 33).

† Possibly something similar is the exploit of the three heroes who drew water from the well at Beth-lehem, when David longed for a drink of it: yet, when they had brought it to him, he would not drink of it, regarding it as the blood of men who went for it at the hazard of their lives. So he poured it out unto Jehovah (2 *Sam.* 23. 15, 16, 17). It is, however, a different Hebrew verb. Again in David's history (2 *Sam.* 14. 14), the woman of Tekoa who pled the cause of Absalom said, "We must needs die, and are as water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again." Was it a view of life under this emblem which led to the use of this emblematic act in worship?

At this point in the history we read for the first time of Samuel as a *judge* (v. 6): "And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpah." Of the vast importance of this act, and of the office of judge which he here assumed with the approval of Jehovah, much more must be said afterwards. For the present it is necessary to concentrate attention on Samuel's assumption of the office of *priest*.

The Philistines heard of the gathering of the children of Israel together at Mizpah, and their lords went up against Israel. There is no reason for supposing that the Israelites had at any time as yet recovered politically from the crushing defeat, with its bloody slaughter, which is recorded in chap. 4. When this gathering of the Philistines was known to the children of Israel, they became afraid of their old enemies. They seem to have been so prostrated that they could do no more than urge Samuel not to cease to cry to Jehovah their God (compare vv. 3 and 4) that He might save them. And Samuel, who had now assumed the office of judge, in these circumstances assumed also the office of priest. For he offered the burnt-offering and cried unto Jehovah on behalf of Israel, and Jehovah answered him; obviously it is meant that He answered him graciously. The Philistines indeed drew near (v. 10): the strict meaning of the verb is that they came close up to Israel. They drew near to battle, probably interrupting the worship, whether out of contempt for Israel and Israel's God, or more probably making a desperate effort to prevent this terrible God (see chap. 4. 7-9) as He was about to assist Israel. On this occasion Jehovah interposed to save His people, whose spiritual state indicated a healthy recovery after Samuel's long process of cure. Jehovah thundered upon the Philistines with a great thunder. Such interventions are recorded repeatedly; and Samuel might in particular remember the words of his own mother's song (chap. 2. 10). It is written that Jehovah discomfited the enemy; the



Hebrew verb and its cognate noun are habitually employed to express the effects of a panic into which Jehovah had thrown His enemies. In this history mention has already been made of the deadly discomfiture which overtook the Philistines while they held the ark in captivity (chap. 5. 9, 11, R.V.), and the noun occurs again at chap. 14. 20. To complete the picture, the historian tells that the Philistines were "smitten down" before Israel. This is the most emphatic Hebrew verb for such cases, and it had been used to describe the disaster which overwhelmed Israel when forsaken by their God (chap. 4. 2, 3, 10), though this does not come under the eye of the reader of our A.V. or R.V. In the happily transformed condition of the men of Israel, they now took the offensive, went out from Mizpah, where they had gathered together, pursued the Philistines and smote them until they came under a place, Beth-car (*v.* 11), which has not yet been identified. And Samuel took a stone and set it up for a memorial, calling it Eben-ezer, that is, Stone of help. One is led to think that this was the crowning evidence of the inversion of the mutual relations of the Philistines and the children of Israel; for it was beside Eben-ezer that Israel had pitched when they were about to fight that disastrous battle (chap. 4. 1). One cannot be absolutely certain that it was the same place; if it was, then in chap. 4 the name has been used by anticipation, unless Samuel took up the old name and applied it to the new circumstances in proof of his faith that Jehovah was now helping His people, who had, to all outward appearance, been forsaken during those twenty years of chastisement.

It is to be observed that this sacrifice offered by Samuel cannot have been an accidental matter, as Saul alleged to Samuel, in his own excuse, that it had been accidental when he offered sacrifice. Samuel offered his sacrifice deliberately, with a whole ascending series of spiritual exercises which led up to this

assumption of the priesthood. The interruptions on the part of the Philistines only served to give more emphasis to his action, and brought out more distinctly that Jehovah approved of what Samuel was doing, and recognised him as truly His priest, whether we succeed or fail in our explanation of the peculiarity of the case. Men may reasonably differ in explaining or justifying the priesthood of Samuel; but the fact remains undoubted.\* Moreover, Samuel was permanently a priest. For at *v.* 17 it is said, that from all his circuits "his return was to Ramah, for there was his house; and there he judged Israel: and he built there an altar unto Jehovah." He stands out all alone before the eyes of Israel. There is nothing said of any other person acting as priest, or of the stated worship at Shiloh, or of any services conducted where the ark was at Kirjath-jearim. Anything of the kind, if it existed, was overshadowed by Samuel's presence and working.

Where can the explanation be found, unless it be in the revolution, both spiritual and political, which had overtaken Israel? The old polity of the Judges, which had arisen after the death of Moses and Joshua, had broken down, and this just at the time that its perfection and consolidation promised to be remarkable in the hands of Eli, at once priest and judge, who had judged Israel forty years. Samuel became judge, apparently much like his predecessors named in the Book of Judges; that is, without saying more of Eli, since of his accession to the office and of his administration there is absolutely nothing recorded. Samuel was called directly and exclusively by Jehovah, and his call was acknowledged by the people, though nothing is said of their having elected him. If he was to be a judge who should "save Israel," he could

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\* It has been suggested that Eli may have felt a divine direction which led him to adopt Samuel into the priesthood; and he may have believed that in the emergency he had authority to do this under the provisions in Deut. 18. 6-8. On such points we are very ignorant.

scarcely start from a lower official position than Eli ; that is to say, when he was to be judge, he must also be priest. The flagitious character and behaviour of Eli's sons had gone as near as could be to overthrowing the priesthood of the house of Aaron and rooting it out. But the singularly wise and godly training of this young Levite, under the eye of his godly mother, yet also in the sight of all Israel, and with uninterrupted and affectionate care on the part of Eli, prepared him in exceptional circumstances for exercising priestly functions, when he had received an extraordinary call, such as St. Paul received to the apostleship. Behind these two offices of priest and judge there was the third, the prophetic, which he had long exercised in the sight of all Israel, with their assured conviction that he was called to it, and established in it, by Jehovah. He was a prophet, possibly at that time the only prophet, certainly the outstanding prophet, in whom all the house of Israel trusted, and whom they all obeyed implicitly.

We behold, then, the concentration of all official graces in Samuel, since the three great offices in the Theocracy, for the most part as it were jealously kept separate, converged naturally, it might almost be said necessarily, and met in his person. Scripture carefully notes that Aaron and all the children of Israel saw how the face of Moses shone in consequence of the special communications of divine grace to him. Once more the children of Israel saw a man with the official glories and dignities of Moses combined in himself. Could they help drawing the conclusion that Samuel was a second Moses ? These twenty years had sown the seeds of a spiritual revolution, and these seeds were now growing up in the life and work of this exalted servant of God. At this crisis in the spiritual history of Israel a great deal more was taking place than the hasty reader discerns on the surface of the record. There are also passing notices which involve much that is not

observed at first. For instance, one of the most touching of those revival scenes which belong to the same class as Samuel's here, was Josiah's Passover, not long before the fall of Jerusalem. To this the testimony is borne (2 Chron. 35. 18), "And there was no Passover like unto that kept in Israel from *the days of Samuel the prophet*; neither did any of the kings of Israel keep such a Passover as Josiah kept." There is not a word in the Books of Samuel regarding this singular or unique Passover kept by him. But those who can read between the lines see what great things were done by him for Israel, things which revolutionised their condition and restored their worship, in connexion with the return of the ark from its exile. Whereas such things were done under the administration of this man, who was prophet, priest, and judge all in one, it is manifest that the Passover, the noblest festival in Israel, in memory of their redemption from the land of Egypt, the house of bondage, must have been observed in the holiest and the heartiest manner.

Probably there is something to be learned from the particulars of Samuel's sacrifice as these are recorded in *v. 9*: "Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it up for a whole burnt offering to Jehovah." That he should assume the priestly office was something strange, outside the ordinary arrangements of the Law. It was an act of assumption, but not an act of presumption. No doubt the prophet and judge had divine indications that Jehovah Himself was leading and calling him to it, since we know that "no man taketh this honour to himself but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." The Law at that time was in an eminent degree "weak through the flesh"; and a new Moses, fitted for the discharge of all these official functions, was led on, swiftly yet not hurriedly, to combine them in his own person, so as to save the commonwealth of Israel from ruin. And there were

peculiarities which marked the whole transaction as outside of the ordinary line of things.

(1) What Samuel offered that day was a *whole burnt offering*. The rare term used here never occurs in the Mosaic regulations, except in Lev. 6. 22, 23 (in the Hebrew Bible, *vv.* 15, 16), with reference to "the oblation of Aaron and of his sons, which they shall offer to Jehovah in the day when he is anointed," see *v.* 20; and it is twice said of this meat (in the R.V. meal) offering, "it shall be wholly burnt." So in the Song of Moses (Deut. 33. 10), the blessing of Levi begins with his having the Thummim and Urim, and ends with the prerogative, "They shall put incense before Thee, and whole burnt offering upon Thine altar."\* Samuel was somehow guided to know that he, though not of Aaron's family, was called to take up this prerogative of the house of Levi, in which he held the most prominent position, and to assert his right and to use his privilege on behalf of Israel by offering the priest's whole burnt offering in the day of his assuming office.

(2) Again, the term here used for a *lamb* seems intended to mark a deviation from the ordinary rules in the Law of Moses. It never occurs in the Pentateuch: † though the kindred participle, in Gen. 30. 32-39, describes the spotted cattle in the singular transactions of Laban and Jacob.

(3) Finally, when it is noted that the lamb was a *sucking lamb*, one is reminded of the fact that on occasion of Aaron officiating for the first time as priest, the sacrifices of Aaron and also of the children of Israel were remarkable for their youthfulness. Was not this sacrifice of a sucking lamb a notice on Samuel's part that he was that day beginning to exercise his priestly functions?

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\* See Ps. 51. 19, the only other passage in which the word means a whole burnt offering.

† Besides this passage, only in Isai. 65. 25, and in a slightly varied form in Isai. 40. 11.

Those unusual religious services with which Samuel and the people began this unprecedented approach to Jehovah, as they drew water and poured it out before Him, and as they fasted and made confession of sin, may have been meant as an indication that at the time they had no regular priest through whom to draw near to God, and that Samuel had not yet taken on himself this office; else he would have been following the usual order if he had first brought a sin offering, before the burnt offering which he did offer when the time came for the assumption of the priestly office.

From this time forward Samuel had no hesitation in acting as a priest. Verse 17 speaks of his house at Ramah, where he judged Israel as at his centre, and also of his permanent altar there. It was there that the people expected him to come home and to offer a sacrifice, which he did on occasion of Saul's first coming to him and partaking of that sacrifice, and being anointed to be prince (or leader) over the inheritance of Jehovah (see chap. 9). So, again, he sacrificed publicly at Gilgal (chap. 11. 15). At Gilgal also he publicly rebuked Saul for invading the priestly office (chap. 13. 8-14), and again for purposing to do so (15. 21). And Samuel exercised this priestly office at other times and in other places, as when he went to anoint David secretly at Bethlehem (16. 1-13)—an act which perhaps stands in some connexion with what David called "the yearly sacrifice there for all the family" (chap. 20. 6).

The evidence is clear to most readers of the Bible that in the time of Samuel's childhood the priesthood of the house of Aaron existed according to the Law, and that the heads of this priesthood were Eli and his sons. But abominable and utterly unfit for their office though these sons of Eli were, there is nothing to suggest that the priestly family furnished any one of sufficiently vigorous moral and spiritual character to resist them and to vindicate, on grounds of moral worth,

the position of the house of Aaron. The terrific judgments which broke upon Israel and upon the priestly house and upon Shiloh, together with the exile of the ark, followed by the twenty years of deep humiliation and repentance under Samuel's prophetic guidance, may well have produced a blessed effect upon the remnant of priests, whether they were numerous or not. It agrees with this that we read, in chap. 14. 2, how "Saul abode in the utmost part of Gibeah, under the pomegranate tree which is in Migron, and the people that were with him, about six hundred men; and Ahijah, the son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli the priest of Jehovah in Shiloh, wearing an ephod." And at v. 18,\* "Saul said unto Ahijah, Bring hither the ark of God. For the ark of God was there at that time, and the children of Israel." And at vv. 36-45, the same priest appears, proposing to the king to draw near unto God: and in consequence Saul asks counsel of God, and receives no answer. Therefore he casts the sacred lot, and discovers who has been the guilty person to whom this difficulty has been owing. In chap. 21 we find David coming to Nob, where the priest Ahimelech was, and where the worship of the sanctuary was maintained by him, as well as some amount of ecclesiastical discipline was administered: since Doeg was "there that day, detained before Jehovah." On that occasion David received from the priest the sword of Goliath, which had been wrapped in the cloth behind the ephod. Chapter 22 relates how Ahimelech was accused to Saul by Doeg, as if he had enquired of Jehovah for David, the two being thus alleged to have conspired against the king. Saul condemned Ahimelech to death, the sentence being executed by Doeg: and along with Ahimelech there where put to

\* Adhering provisionally, without discussion, to the Massoretic text. For our present purpose little or no difference would be made by the adoption of the Septuagint text, reading the *ephod* instead of the *ark*. It is given in the R.V. margin.

death eighty-five priests, persons that did wear a linen ephod, and also the inhabitants of Nob, men and women and children and sucklings, and their cattle. Apparently only one of the sons of Ahimelech escaped, and he fled after David, and told him how Saul had slain the priests of Jehovah. This was Abiathar, who became a prominent man in the history of David. David accused himself of having caused this massacre, received and protected Abiathar, publicly recognised him as in his father's room the priest of Jehovah, and habitually consulted Jehovah by means of him, as he wore the ephod, and received answer in his discharge of priestly functions, answers which undeniably were from God.

There is no evidence that Samuel ever broke loose from his earliest and uniform associations with Shiloh and the tabernacle there, its services and its priests; and it is in the highest degree improbable that he ever took up an attitude which was hostile to them. At the same time we do read of his deliberately assuming the office of the priesthood, in the face of all Israel assembled by him at Mizpah, at a crisis in the nation's history; and in acting so he was supported by the hearty approbation of the people of Israel. Moreover, there is nothing to favour the hypothesis that he claimed to be a priest only in some inferior or looser sense of the word. The natural explanation of what he did is to be sought for in this fact, that he felt himself assuredly called by Jehovah to occupy a position more nearly like that of Moses than any other Israelite ever did. Moses had been the mediator of the covenant. He had discharged full priestly functions alongside of Aaron himself, as is related in *Exod. 40* and in *Lev. 9*. Nay, more than this, Moses had received the commission to consecrate Aaron and his sons, and to install them (in Hebrew phrase, to fill their hands) in the priesthood, and he did so. (See *Exod. 29*; *Lev. 8*; *Num. 20. 23-28*.) He even enjoyed special privileges to which



the priests never attained (Exod. 19, 20, 24; Num. 12). Samuel and the people to whom he had ministered in the sanctuary from his infancy, favoured by Jehovah unspeakably above the worthless priests among whom he had been brought up, could look back on something in his case approaching to a miraculous birth (compare John the Baptist's case), and to a unique training throughout, all pointing to higher work. So when he became judge in Israel, and then took the office of priest, there was nothing more that could be given to him.

Additional emphasis was laid upon his assumption of the priestly office, when we contrast it with his firm, undaunted resistance to a similar assumption on the part of Saul (chap. 13. 8-14, 15. 10-23), according to the common exposition of these passages, with which no other that has been proposed can be placed in competition. Similarly, Moses had associated himself with Aaron in resisting Korah.

## CHAPTER VI.

## SAMUEL AS JUDGE.

THE transcendent grandeur of Samuel's mission was that he combined and held in his own hands the three great offices in the holy commonwealth of Israel: he was prophet, priest, and judge all in one. It would be out of place to discuss the relative importance or honour of the three offices, for the grace bestowed upon him as a man, not less than as a functionary, takes away all practical interest from such an inquiry in his case. His offices as a prophet and a priest have been already discussed, and there is little need for protracted discussion of his office as judge (chap. 7. 6, 15-17), and this for two reasons: (1) There is nothing to mark it out as different from the cases of other judges in Israel, unless in so far as the dignity or the privileges of office may have been growing more and more, so that Eli and Samuel, standing outside the Book of Judges, were at once both judges and priests to Israel. Thus it is announced by the apostle Paul to the worshippers in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia, that when God had destroyed the seven nations of Canaan, and given their land for an inheritance to His people, "after these things He gave them judges until Samuel the prophet" (Acts 13. 20). (2) Some of the details of his acting as judge will come out to view in examining the transference of authority from the judge to the king.

The remarkable pre-eminence of Samuel over all the other administrators of the laws of Moses has led to his being placed by some of the writers of Scripture on a level with Moses himself: "Moses and Aaron among his priests, and

Samuel among them who call upon His Name, they called upon Jehovah, and He answered them" (Psalm 99. 6). "Then said Jehovah unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before Me, yet My mind could not be toward this people; cast them out of My sight and let them go forth" (Jer. 15. 1).

The principles, methods, and results of Samuel's complex administration are announced very tersely, yet most comprehensively, in chap. 7. 13-17. It is a statement which demands careful reading and thorough consideration.

*First.*—The foundation of Samuel's public acts on behalf of his people Israel was the establishment of their independence from the Philistines, who had repeatedly obtained the mastery over them, and on this latest and saddest occasion had for a time carried the very ark of Jehovah into captivity. "So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more within the borders of Israel; and the hand of Jehovah was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored," literally returned, "to Israel, from Ekron even unto Gath; and the border thereof did Israel deliver out of the hand of the Philistines." Let it be noted that Ekron was the last Philistine city to which the ark had been carried round: it was the people of Ekron who refused to let it remain any longer within the border of their land. Gath was the city into which it had been previously carried, and from which, in despair, it had been removed to Ekron. This verse, then, takes for granted that every one was familiar with the fact that all this Philistine district had been the scene of Philistine triumphs over Israel, and apparently over Israel's God. But the Philistines were now compelled to disgorge their prey and to see the land of Israel safe and the people happy under Samuel. It is not said that this took place immediately and all at once; it may have

needed a lengthened struggle and repeated victories. But if so, in this fighting the tribes of Israel took the offensive and recovered what they had lost.

*Secondly.*—In marked contrast to his wars with the Philistines was his policy of peace with the nations whom Israel had been commanded by Moses and Joshua to destroy. “And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.” The Amorites might be understood to be that one of the seven doomed nations to whom in strictness this name belonged. Yet if so, the meaning is not essentially altered from that which is obtained by taking the word in a wider sense. For what is expressly said to have been done with one nation must have been the rule for the other six, unless a reason can be assigned for the difference of policy.\*

The significance of the statement that under Samuel “there

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\* Of those six nations the *Girgashites* may be said to drop entirely from the page of history, whatever be the explanation of the fact that they are mentioned only in Josh. 3. 10; 24. 11. The *Perizzites* are mentioned in these passages, and also in one or two enumerations, Josh. 9. 1; 11. 3; 12. 8; 1 Kings 9. 20; then, after Josh. 17. 15, once in a more restricted enumeration, Judg. 3. 5; also in Judg. 1. 4, 5, where the *Canaanites* and the *Perizzites* are named as allies. Other instances of the *Canaanites* being named seem to be cases in which this word is meant to include the whole seven nations taken together, always of course excepting those enumerations to which reference has just been made. Probably, however, we ought to except Josh. 5. 1, in which the *Amorites* and *Canaanites* are named together, as practically including the whole seven; and also 2 Sam. 24. 7, where similarly we read of the *Hivites* and the *Canaanites*. Of the *Jebusites* the like remark may be made; apart from the enumerations, and not overlooking Josh. 11. 3, which may refer to Jebusite colonists settled in the north, it may be said that their name occurs only in connexion with their metropolis, Jebus, that is, Jerusalem; and indeed with two events in David's history, his storming that metropolis and making it his own, and his buying the threshing-floor of Araunah, on which to build his altar and to have a site for his temple. The *Hivites* are mentioned as being found under Mount Hermon (Josh. 11. 3) and in Mount Lebanon (Judg. 3. 3; compare 2 Sam. 24. 7); this, however, was on the outskirts of Canaan on the north, and such people might have extremely little to do with Samuel. Beyond these passages mention is scarcely made of them, except in the account of the Hivites of the four cities, Gibeon and Chephirah and Beeroth and Kirjath-jearim, who made a league with Joshua by a stratagem, and were reduced to the position of slaves to the tabernacle. With these, of course, Samuel had no need to make peace. Saul, on the contrary, became deeply involved in guilt when he slew them in his zeal for the children of Israel and Judah. In the narrative of this the name given to them, however, is not Hivites but Amorites (2 Sam. 21. 2); the name Amorite being therefore used in a wide sense, as it often is, and probably in the statement now under consideration, that there was

was peace between Israel and the Amorites," the doomed nations of Canaan, is seen when this peace is contrasted with his successful war against the Philistines. For the Philistines had been allies of the Patriarchs of the house of Israel, and probably were not irreconcilable enemies even so late as the age of Moses and Joshua. Here there is recorded something which is much more than a modification in policy; it was an absolute reversal of what had been the principle of the policy of Israel towards those doomed nations. It implied that the attitude of the two parties was to be the opposite of what it had hitherto been (see Josh. 23. 12, 13). No doubt in the age of the Judges there had repeatedly been peace between Israel and those nations: but it had been in times of back-sliding, and it had been in defiance of the Law of God as given by Moses, which Law was enforced on the conscience of Israel by the entreaties and warnings of both Moses and Joshua.\*

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peace between Israel and them. Of the seven nations the only other is that of the *Hittites*, who are scarcely mentioned except in the lists. The chief exception is in the expression, "the kings of the Hittites," whose land apparently lay outside the land occupied by the Israelites (see Judg. 1. 26; 1 Kings 10. 29; 2 Kings 7. 6). A very powerful kingdom they seem to have formed (though at so early a time that the Greek historians did not know of them), which at last was crushed between the Egyptians and the Assyrians; Scripture does not furnish any account of the struggle. Two Hittites are also named as distinguished officers of David (1 Sam. 26. 6; 2 Sam. 11. 3, etc.). Finally, in Ezek. 16. 3, 45, Amorite and Hittite are combined in a symbolical description of the genealogy of apostate Jerusalem, so as to set forth the heathenish and degraded condition of the people of Jehovah.

\* Nay, a careful reading of the first chapter of Judges raises the question, were there not two different policies toward the Canaanites which found favour among the tribes of Israel? There was the policy of strict obedience to the divine command to destroy them, a policy followed out by Judah and Simeon. But was there not also a milder or less faithful interpretation of the command, which was favoured by Benjamin and Ephraim and Manasseh? Did not these, the children of Rachel, who had stolen and carried away with her into Canaan her father's *teraphim*, hesitate about entirely driving out or destroying those nations? In some cases is it not certain that they made a profit of this policy of sparing them, as they contrived a system of taxes and custom-house duties, which those mercantile Canaanites were content to pay? This might give a sharper point to the reproach of the prophet Hosea (chap. 12. 7), that Ephraim was a trafficker, that he had himself become a Canaanite. As for the tribes of Asher and Naphtali and Dan, children of the handmaids, their evil policy was still further developed. This chapter testifies that some other tribes let the Canaanites dwell among them; but of these last-named it says that they dwelt among the Canaanites.

Now the peace made and maintained with the Amorites was a peace made by Samuel, the greatest of the Judges, who held in his own hands all the three great offices of the Theocracy, whose personal character gave a guarantee for the right exercise of his unparalleled authority, and whose wars with the Philistines proved him to be both brave and sagacious. When the godly, well-instructed Samuel acted thus, it is impossible to explain his conduct by saying that he was a backslider. What conclusion can be drawn but this, that the great prophet, who was also a priest and judge, felt himself entitled to take a position different from that of the Mosaic law, or, perhaps one prefers saying, felt himself entitled to add a new commandment to it? This again confirms the conclusion already reached, that Samuel stands on a higher level than the ordinary prophets, a level not easily to be distinguished from that of Moses himself. Israel had been strictly enjoined to root out all these seven nations, and had been amply warned of the disastrous results to themselves if they neglected to obey the solemn command. Their whole history, as recorded in the Book of Judges, furnishes abundant evidence of the truth of this warning, and the need for it. Yet it remains true that there are certain duties which cannot be discharged by us at all, if we fail to discharge them at the appointed time. It is somewhat as an arm or limb put out of joint, and not properly set or not set at all, makes a new socket for itself in which it works after a certain fashion : and we should make matters worse by attempting to force it back into its original right place. In like manner, after we have persisted in neglect of God's command, or in high-handed disobedience to it, a certain interval of time, known only to God, may sometimes have surrounded us with a new set of circumstances, a condition of things involving a perplexing and unsatisfactory choice of difficulties, amid which we find that we must act as we best

can. Israel had come into such a perplexing condition. The Amorites ought not to have been spared. But after the lapse of centuries they had acquired a firm position within the land of Israel, alongside the people of Jehovah, and the wheat and the tares were growing together. It only remained for Israel to adjust themselves to the new situation as best they might. For they had of deliberate choice brought themselves into it. Samuel was the only man who could see this clearly, and proclaim the consequent course of duty authoritatively. When he acted as he did, he took this responsible step, and made himself as it were a new Moses.

In acting thus Samuel gave another proof that his administration marked or made a period of transition, such as Israel had not been passing through since the Law was given to Moses. Every man in Israel was capable of observing this: at least, no one could help seeing it when it was set before him. And of a reversal of this new policy inaugurated by Samuel there is not a trace in the subsequent history, unless so far as some may attach weight to these two incidents:—

(1) Saul made that unhappy and wicked attempt to destroy the Gibeonites “in his zeal for the children of Israel and Judah.”

(2) Pharaoh gave a marriage present of the city of Gezer to his daughter, the wife of Solomon: he took it and burnt it with fire and slew the inhabitants that dwelt in the city; see 1 Kings 9. 16, 20–23. Perhaps Solomon may have treated any remaining inhabitants not unkindly, though he seems to have reduced them to the condition of servitude, to labour at his temple and other buildings, as the following verses tell. Were those servants of Solomon put in a position much resembling that of the Gibeonites? In Ezra 2. 43–58; 8. 20, there are lists of Nethinim, that

is "persons given," presumably the Gibeonites and Solomon's servants.\*

*Thirdly.*—The full unfolding of the policy of Samuel's administration is described in chap. 7. 15–17. The account of it is brief, yet it is comprehensive. The verses require to be studied and expanded in the way that any godly and intelligent Israelite would do. "And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And he went from year to year in circuit to Beth-el, and Gilgal, and Mizpah, and he judged Israel in all these places. And his return was to Ramah; for there was his house; and there he judged Israel; and he built there an altar unto Jehovah."

Some particulars of his judging are recorded with greater minuteness or precision than are those of any of his predecessors. Why was he in the habit of going in circuit to three places, all of which were very near one another? And why then did he return to Ramah, whose position is not indeed certain, but which yet could not have been far away, and may have been quite close at hand? It is written in Deut. 17. 8–13 that in appeal cases the supreme judge, as might naturally have been expected, should judge Israel in the place which Jehovah their God had chosen, or should choose, the place where also the priest was who stood before Jehovah to minister there, for the judge and the priest were to go together in this proceeding. But at the time when this duty came to be laid upon Samuel, and when he combined in his own person the functions of judge and priest for all Israel, there was no longer any place which Jehovah their God chose; Shiloh had been rejected, and

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\* The very expression, "there was peace between Israel and the Amorites," warns against inferring that there was an amalgamation of the two races. Hence there was the possibility of easy civil incorporation with friendly inferior races, perhaps analogous to the mixed multitude that went up out of Egypt along with the tribes of Israel at the Exodus. But it was felt to be wrong to intermarry with them, as Solomon is severely blamed for doing (1 Kings 11. 1, 2; Ezra 9. 1, 2, etc.).



no one knows whether the city itself was not a ruin without an inhabitant, as perhaps is the meaning of Jer. 26. 9. In this time of anarchy, when it might be said that ordinary church privileges were suspended, what was Samuel to do, and where was he to go? In the absence of instructions applicable to this situation of affairs, Samuel might feel that he was thrown back on the general principles on which the Law rested; or he might think of the language of Moses in an analogous case, while circumcision and other privileges were suspended during the wandering in the wilderness. "Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes" (Deut. 12. 8). Or, as he looked around for precedents, he may have applied to himself what is recorded of Moses in Exod. 33. 7, after the golden calf had been made and had been broken, when the erection of the proposed tabernacle had been interrupted. There is some variation in the R.V. from the A.V.; yet in regard to the tent of meeting, or trysting tent, they are at one. "Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And it came to pass that every one which sought Jehovah went out unto the tent of meeting, which was without the camp." If the common opinion is correct that Moses made his own tent a provisional sanctuary, Samuel might either find a precedent in this, or might solve his difficulty on similar principles, by building his altar at his own house, where the congregation would come together, making use of him to consult Jehovah, as in former less unsettled times they would have gone for this purpose to Eli, the priest and judge at Shiloh. It had been Hannah's purpose, it was her understanding of the vow which she was to fulfil, that when her child was weaned, she would bring him up to Shiloh, "that he may appear before Jehovah, and there abide for ever"; and so she said to Eli, "I also have

granted him to Jehovah ; as long as he lives, he is granted to Jehovah" (chap. 1. 22, 28). The course of divine providence indeed had made it impossible that Samuel should dwell for ever in His house at Shiloh. The vow could be performed, and the spiritual privilege enjoyed, only if Jehovah should condescend to dwell with Samuel in his house at Ramah. Jehovah had been pleased to appear "again in Shiloh" (chap. 3. 21), after a time of comparative withdrawal. Amid the perplexities of the time, yet assured of the returning grace of the God of Israel to His repenting people, Samuel might proceed to argue that now, since there had ceased to be any place chosen by Jehovah in which His name was to dwell, His people might be guided by their great leader to fall back on places where Jehovah had manifested himself on earlier occasions.

There were three such places, namely, Mizpah, Gilgal, and Beth-el; and it was to these three that Samuel went in circuit. Mizpah was very early distinguished by Jehovah, when the tribes met there for worship, during the civil war between them and Benjamin ; see Judg. 20. 1 ; 21. 1, 5, 8. It is impossible to determine with absolute confidence at which of several places bearing this name the tribes came together, as they ended a long course of humiliation and discipline, which issued in Jephthah becoming judge ; yet there is no place that has a stronger claim to be selected than this Mizpah, which had hallowed recollections associated with it from the experiences of the tribes in the great civil war. Certainly it was to this Mizpah that Samuel bade the people gather, after their heart-breaking troubles, and his long-continued training of them while under this discipline (chap. 7. 5-7). For his object was to engage them in very special exercises of worship, at the end of which he was to assume the two offices of priest and judge, and to gain that decisive victory over the Philistines which restored and secured the prosperity of Israel. One may see how

emphatically all this was associated with Mizpah, if he takes notice how the name occurs six times in eight verses (5-12). It is further to be observed that as Samuel began his administration at Mizpah, so he arranged to lay it down there, when he "called the people together unto Jehovah to Mizpah" (chap. 10. 17), where the lot should give them from Jehovah that king whom they insisted on receiving.

With respect to the other two places named, it is quite unnecessary to point out in detail how outstanding are the positions of both Beth-el and Gilgal in the earlier history of Israel, as places where the presence of Jehovah with His people was remarkably manifested. For the prominence of the two in the actings of Samuel as he first introduced Saul to the kingdom see chap. 10. 3, 8, and for the prominence of Gilgal singly at the renewal of the kingdom see chap. 11. 14, 15.

All the three places, therefore, are intimately associated by Samuel with his office as judge, at all events, and with his transference of his authority to Saul as king or leader of God's people. Beth-el, as well as Mizpah, had been associated with the whole twelve tribes of Israel in the civil war (Judg. 20. 18, 26 ; 21. 2, 19) ; though, by an unfortunate mistake, it is translated "house of God" in the A.V., except in the last of these passages.

Indeed, the question may be asked, Why did Samuel go to precisely these three places, which are so near each other, since there were other places which also had a similar interest in the past history of divine manifestations to Israel? And this question may be considered all the more pressing, since if Samuel had gone abroad beyond this very limited circuit, he might have spread his influence much more evenly over the entire land of Israel, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, as it is expressed in chap. 3. 20. There is no direct answer to this question furnished in Scripture, and it becomes the student to

speaking modestly in circumstances in which he may well feel his ignorance. Nevertheless, there are some considerations which occur to one who reads the history patiently and reverently, such as the following :—

*First.*—Is there any reason to assume that Samuel wished to take steps for extending his influence and distributing it equally over all parts of the country? The text just mentioned indicates that already, before his twenty years of spiritually guiding the people began, his name had become quite familiar to the whole house of Israel, and his position acknowledged without opposition or even hesitation. There is nothing to suggest that Samuel was an ambitious man. It is more probable that, like others of the prophets, he felt the responsibility of his position sufficiently heavy, without any attempt on his own part to add to the burden. He accepted it only because it was laid upon him by God.

Moreover, instead of laboured effort to distribute influence equally over the country, the whole genius of the Law of Moses favoured concentration upon a single point, the place which Jehovah chose, or should choose, by making His name dwell in it. At the moment when Samuel had to act, the danger was that this centralising principle might be seriously weakened by the ruin in which Shiloh had come to be involved, and by the uncertainty whether Jehovah might refuse to manifest Himself again at any new sacred centre which should take the place of Shiloh. It was natural, therefore, that Samuel should select as centres, in a temporary emergency, places which Jehovah had already honoured, and which at the same time were cities in the middle part of the land of Israel, to which the whole people might most conveniently and safely be brought together in their present circumstances, and where the reappearance of Jehovah might be looked for with more probability than in some remoter spot.

*Secondly.*—Things sacred and things civil being wonderfully conjoined in the constitution of the commonwealth of Israel, as they also were in Samuel's official position and in his practice, this tendency towards centralisation is the more pressed on our notice by the care taken, even at earlier times, to strengthen the civil authority when it was in danger of being neglected or divided. In the commonwealth of the Twelve Tribes there was a real serious risk of anarchy with all its attendant evils. The Book of Judges emphasizes this danger by the statement (chaps. 17. 6; 21. 25): "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes." That very Book of Judges furnishes three examples of what might otherwise have been reckoned unreasonably severe punishment, if not barbarity, which, however, was unavoidable in the interests of the commonwealth: (1) There was the slaughter of the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead by the assembled tribes in the great civil war. (2) There was the slaughter of the men of Succoth and the men of Penuel by Gideon. (3) There was the slaughter of the men of Ephraim by Jephthah. And at the time when Samuel was in process of handing over his authority to Saul, as the new ruler, the beginning of Saul's first exploit was a summons to every man throughout all the borders of Israel to come forth after him and Samuel to fight with the children of Ammon, on pain of his cattle being cut in pieces, and it might be even himself. It was no more than was to be expected when we find it written that Samuel avoided the temptation to scatter and weaken the influence of the supreme civil authority. His going on circuit within so narrow a range as these three cities, where he judged the people, and his return to his own house at Ramah, where also he judged Israel, according to the careful statement of the historian, these were his natural and effective arrangements in that critical period for preventing the

dissipation of energy, and his whole procedure was on well-known constitutional lines.

*Thirdly.*—There were places to which, in other circumstances, it is conceivable that Samuel might have gone, from which, nevertheless, he turned away. Perhaps one should say that he did so deliberately, because for him at that time to have gone to them would have been to injure this principle of unity in both the civil and the ecclesiastical spheres, when it had been already seriously weakened by the sinning of the people, and by the consequent judgments of God. (1) Such a place to be avoided was *Dan*, where a remarkable image-worship had been set up, along with an ephod, by the men of the tribe of Dan, who had conquered this town, and had given to it the name of the patriarch their ancestor. It enjoyed a succession of Levitical priests, who put forth an apparently true claim to be descended from Moses, if we accept the reading adopted in the R.V. They “were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the exile of the land,” “all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh” (Judg. 18. 30, 31). (2) Another such place was *Ophrah*, where one of the noblest and best of the judges, Gideon, had yielded to the temptation of putting an ephod which he had made alongside of the spoils which he had taken in war from the enemies of Israel. “And all Israel went thither a whoring after it, which thing became a snare to Gideon and to his house” (Judg. 8. 27). (3) Samuel no doubt avoided *Shiloh* itself, since to have gone there of his own accord to judge the people and to restore the worship of the tabernacle from which the ark had been taken away, would have been to make light, openly and immediately, of the tremendous judgments which had come upon Israel on account of their sins in connexion with this place, and the actings of its priesthood, the house of Eli. Samuel may have felt an additional reason for avoiding Shiloh. According to some indications in

Psalms 78 the tribe of Ephraim had had a heavier share than the other tribes in the guilt which brought on that judgment ; see particularly *vv.* 9-11, 67. (4) *Shechem* was another place distinguished by divine manifestations in earlier times. But the reason just hinted may have kept Samuel in like manner from going to it. For *Shechem* also was within the tribe of Ephraim, only a few miles from *Shiloh*. (5) *Beth-shemesh* was the place to which the ark had returned under singular guidance, which may be regarded as divine, from its exile among the Philistines. But the very occasion of this return had been signalised by a terrible judgment on its inhabitants and the people gathered to it, and in their terror they had sent it away from them to a non-Israelite town, where it lay safe indeed among those slaves of the tabernacle, yet in obscurity, for twenty years. (6) Samuel may have been aware of objections to other places, even though in certain respects these were suitable and inviting. We know of one such place named in Samuel's history at a later time, *Beer-sheba* : " And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. And they were judges in Beer-sheba" (chap. 8. 1, 2). He might have thought of this favourite home of the great patriarch as suitable for one of his seats of judging ; none the less so that, even while he was still very young, " all Israel, from Dan even unto Beer-sheba, knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of Jehovah " (chap. 3. 20). Yet there might be reasons for rejecting it, perhaps as under Philistine influences. Certainly it is bracketed in pollution with Dan in *Amos* 5. 5. And though Samuel did afterwards choose it for his sons to be judges there, he may have made a mistake about the place as well as about the persons.

Samuel thus appears as a second Moses, being prophet, priest, and ruler, all in one. With this unparalleled unifying, this combination of grace and authority in his own hands, he

might almost be considered a new legislator for Israel, as he set up these circuits for the constant stated administration of justice by a strong central authority, and also as he reversed the old law requiring the destruction of the Canaanite nations, and made peace with them, and admitted them into a friendly connexion with the people of Jehovah. This must have implied that they gave up their heathenism and adopted the worship of Him, as those Hivites had done who beguiled Joshua into making a covenant of peace with them. It is this which brings out the point of connexion between the two parts of what may be called Samuel's programme of policy. It is not for us to overlook it, though it may be impossible to say how far it was understood by Samuel, and how far he was an unconscious instrument in God's hands. The connecting link of the two parts is this : if the Amorites, including under these the seven Canaanite nations so far as spared by Israel, were to remain settled peacefully and familiarly up and down the land of Israel, from Dan to Beer-sheba, mixed up among the peculiar people of Jehovah, it was necessary that the central authority should be strengthened. Thus alone could Samuel provide a counterpoise to the new dangers to be apprehended from the altered relations of the two races. The legislation of Moses had given prominence to the enormous risks of contamination if the idolatrous and abominably corrupt Canaanites were left in the land and became intermingled with Israel ; yet this was now to be the normal condition with Samuel's sanction, nay, by his orders. If these new and growing risks were to be successfully met, there was need of new protection and support, both from within and from without. Henceforth the children of Israel needed more careful moral training, so as to know what was right and to do it. To supply this need, Samuel also set himself to found or to extend the so-called schools of the prophets. And outside of themselves men needed to have the



central authority strengthened, an object after which they had for a long time been groping, it may be without very well knowing in what their efforts would issue, and to supply this felt need Samuel introduced the kingdom.

It is instructive to observe that Samuel's policy of adding to the power and influence of the prophetic and princely orders in the interest of living godliness did not include, so far as is recorded, any corresponding effort in favour of the priesthood, the third order of the Theocracy. Measures of this nature had been taken in the time of Moses, and such would again be taken in the times that were to come after. By acting and refraining from acting in these directions, Samuel showed himself to be the head of the *prophetic* order; this is equivalent to saying that the subsequent prophets proved themselves in this respect true successors of Samuel. There were spiritual evils of which they took cognisance with profound sorrow; and yet they avoided seeking a remedy for these by multiplying religious observances, whether these were in conformity with the Law of Moses or not. Moses had said to his assistant Joshua, "Would God that all Jehovah's people were prophets, that Jehovah would put His Spirit upon them." And Joel and Jeremiah had predicted the universal gift of the Spirit under glorious rulers of the house of Judah, and in the line of David. It was Samuel who led the way to these anticipations, as he made his arrangements for the prophetic and kingly offices.

On the other hand, while it is not recorded that Samuel did anything to strengthen the priestly office, there is not even a hint that he did anything to weaken it. For it had been instituted in the family of Aaron by the Law of Moses. The holy life and teaching of Samuel at Shiloh, confirmed by the appalling judgments on Eli's house, "at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle," had been God's method of giving spiritual revival and strength to the degenerate

priesthood. Thus we read of "Ahijah the priest of Jehovah in Shiloh" (1 Sam. 14. 3), of his son Ahimelech (if these be not two names for the same person, as some have thought), and of his son Abiathar, the devoted friend of David. But probably the family of Eli encountered humiliations and trials of which no particulars are recorded; for though Ahijah is perhaps said to have been the priest of Jehovah in Shiloh, this may equally well be the description of Eli, and the other two were certainly not there, they ministered at Nob. We have no reason, then, to imagine that Samuel failed to do honour to them in their priestly office; all that can be affirmed is that nothing definite is said of the relation in which he stood to them. It might be natural to suggest that his relation was somewhat like that of Moses to Aaron and his sons. Moses could perform any priestly act, whether Aaron and his sons did or did not take part in it, though the normal state of affairs may have been that they acted together. So it might be with Samuel and the priests of the house of Eli; whether at Shiloh a feeble attempt was made for a time, or occasionally, to keep up the old worship, from which however the ark was wanting, or whether Samuel's new arrangements led the people to worship at the places where he administered the affairs of the people of God. These places were, habitually his own house at Ramah, and in circuit the three places, Bethel and Gilgal and Mizpah. Of these alternative suppositions the latter is the less complex, and therefore the more probable. There was no overthrow of the priesthood of the house of Aaron involved in moving the tabernacle from Shiloh; least of all can this be alleged since the ark had been taken away from it by a manifest judgment of God. Compare Matt. 23. 38, "Behold your house is left unto you desolate," with Jer. 7. 12; 26. 9. In the midst of such judgments the sorely chastened priestly family may have been in great straits

for their very livelihood, and may have been in great perplexity how to act.

Wherever the people of Jehovah assembled, there it was their privilege to call for the ark to be with them, if this seemed desirable in the circumstances. So it was habitually in the journey through the wilderness. So it was, at least, in some of the wars recorded in Scripture : in the great civil war (Judg. 20. 27, 28), and in the wars of Saul and of David (1 Sam. 14. 2, 3, 18, 36 ; 2 Sam. 11. 11 ; 15. 24-29). Also, when Solomon thrust out Abiathar from being priest unto Jehovah, he explained that he refrained from putting him to death as a traitor, "because thou barest the ark of the Lord Jehovah before David my father, and because thou wast afflicted in all wherein my father was afflicted" (1 Kings 2. 26). But during those twenty years of discipline to Israel, while Samuel as a prophet dealt with them and for a considerably longer time, which cannot be precisely determined (see 1 Chron. 13. 1-3), unless in an emergency, the ark was left in obscurity in the care of a godly family at Kirjath-jearim, one of the Gibeonite cities whose inhabitants had been reduced by Joshua to the humble rank of temple servants, during the administration of Samuel and the reign of Saul and part of that of David.

In this period of disturbance the dishonoured tabernacle, deprived of the ark, is found with the high priest Ahimelech at Nob, a town in the vicinity of Jerusalem towards the north, farther south than Michmash and Ramah, though its position is uncertain (chap. 21. 1-7 ; 22. 9-11 ; Isai. 10. 28, 29, 32). Chapter 22 records the massacre of eighty-five priests at Nob, with the women and children, by the command of Saul ; and the only one whose escape is mentioned, Abiathar, became a fugitive, and shared the fortunes of David, by whom he was acknowledged as high priest (see the preceding paragraph).

And he executed this office and received answers for David from Jehovah. As Nob was smitten with the edge of the sword, it is what might be expected that nothing more is said of it in connexion with the tabernacle and the house of Eli. Subsequently, in the course of David's reign and at the beginning of Solomon's, Gibeon appears as "the great high place," where the tabernacle stood, and where the national worship was kept up. Though Scripture tells nothing of the reasons which led to the selection of Gibeon as the resting place of the empty tabernacle, it is known to have been the chief of the four Hivite cities which furnished the servants of the house of Jehovah. Kirjath-jearim, the resting place of the ark, was another of these four cities. We can scarcely suppose that there was no connexion between those two remarkable facts. Rather one might think it probable that these humble temple slaves received from Jehovah the honour of being instruments in the revival which he granted to Israel under the guidance of Samuel; whose policy toward the remaining Canaanites would naturally have a favourable influence upon the condition of every section of them, among the rest upon these Hivites. On the occasion of the special vision and promises granted to Solomon, the lavish sacrifices were offered by him partly at Gibeon, where the empty tabernacle still was, and partly at Jerusalem "before the ark of the covenant of Jehovah," for David had brought it thither from Kirjath-jearim.

Of the partition of the public religious services by David between the place of the ark and the place of the tabernacle (which may have been owing to well-known jealousies between the houses of Ephraim and Judah, or in connexion with them), we have an account in 1 Chron. 16. 37-42. It is expressly said that the ark was brought up from Kirjath-jearim to Jerusalem. We can scarcely doubt that there it was placed under the care of Abiathar, David's intimate friend; as we are

informed that the tabernacle was in the high place at Gibeon, under the care of Zadok the priest.\*

It would be interesting if proof were discovered that the *three places* in which Samuel discharged his public offices on behalf of Israel were connected with the *three feasts* or solemn assemblies or trysts, as the Hebrew term is variously translated. There is certainly no improbability in this. Yet no positive direct evidence is known in its favour. All that can be said is that

\* Many writers depreciate as much as they can the historical authority of the Book of Chronicles, and they reckon this narrative unreliable. Yet even a very suspicious critic may observe confirmations of the narrative in the account of David transporting the ark, as given in 2 Sam. 6, while no mention is made of the tabernacle. Some importance is assigned to Gibeon, as the scene of the fatal tournament between the young men of David and those of Ish-bosheth, which was followed by a battle (2 Sam. 2. 12, 13, 16, 24). There was also a pool at Gibeon, such as might supply the indispensable water for the many purposes of the services at the tabernacle (2 Sam. 2. 13), with which compare "the great waters that are in Gibeon" (Jer. 41. 12). It may further be noticed that at Gibeon there was the great stone (2 Sam. 20. 8), just as there was one at Kirjath-jearim, beside which those Philistine cows stood when they brought back the ark to Israel. Saul's slaughter of the Gibeonites, in his zeal for the children of Israel and Judah, may have been connected with something he was doing for the tabernacle, perhaps placing it at Gibeon, where it certainly was after Nob had been destroyed by him. At either of these cities, Nob or Gibeon, the tabernacle was within easy reach of Saul's residence at Gibeon; and he might well wish to have the house of God near his own house. Reconciliation was impossible between Saul and the priestly house of Eli after the massacre at Nob. Zadok, the priest, however, appears alongside of Abiathar, on an equal footing with him in the care of the ark and of the tabernacle, according to David's arrangements. And these must have been arrangements very firmly established, otherwise they would scarcely have remained unshaken amid the confusion and distractions at the time of Absalom's rebellion. It is not easy to conceive the origin of so singular an arrangement as that of two co-ordinate high priests instead of one, unless the unsettled political situation gave occasion for it. On the one hand, Saul needed to have a high priest; on the other hand, it was impossible for him to think of one belonging to Eli's house. What more natural than that he should go back on the line of Aaron's successor, Eleazar, his elder son? This was apparently the rightful line, which had in some unknown way lost the high priesthood. Zadok did belong to the line of Eleazar, as Abiathar belonged to the line of Ithamar, Aaron's younger son. One of the little notices (1 Chron. 12. 23-28), such as enliven the genealogical details of the first portion of that book, relates how, among those who came to David, to Hebron, to turn the kingdom of Saul to David, according to the word of Jehovah, there was "Jehoiada, the leader of the house of Aaron, and with him were three thousand seven hundred; and Zadok, a young man, mighty of valour, and of his father's house, twenty and two captains." These circumstances make the conjecture attractive, that Saul had somehow taken steps to place Zadok, of the house of Eleazar, in the position of high priest, instead of any of the hostile family of Eli, who were of the house of Ithamar.

it fits well in with what is stated in a passage which commentators and critics have reckoned very obscure, that Saul "tarried seven days, according to Samuel's tryst; but Samuel came not to Gilgal, and the people were scattered from him" (chap. 13. 8). Afterwards it will be also seen how this supposition fits into the history of Samuel's acts as he handed over his authority to Saul.

All these arrangements of Samuel were adjusted to one another, they were made to give support to one another, and there was a completeness in them when taken together. And on this account, though from one point of view they might be called temporary and transitional, in another sense they might be called permanent. Thus it is said, "The hand of Jehovah was against the Philistines *all the days of Samuel*" (1 Sam. 7. 13). A general summing up like this must, indeed, not be pressed to mean that the Philistines never gave any more trouble to Israel, or even that they never had any successes, nor Israel any reverses. Nevertheless the student of the Hebrew text observes that of the rare occasions on which the article is used in the original (though the English translator can scarcely dispense with it as he uses the expression "the Philistines"), two occur in this verse. Possibly the force of this use of the article is to give emphasis to the fact that the entire Philistine nation are represented here as acting or suffering unitedly and solidly. Again (*v.* 15), "Samuel judged Israel *all the days of his life*," that is, with an authority which did not come to an end by the elevation of Saul to the throne. Saul himself made this plain on the occasion of his first exploit, the deliverance of Jabesh-gilead from Nahash the king of the Ammonites, when he proclaimed, "Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen," cutting a yoke of oxen in pieces (chap. 11. 7); and in response, the people came out as one man. Such authority Samuel exercised

again when Saul sinned by sparing Agag the king of the Amalekites (chap. 15). So it continued to the end: "And Samuel died, and all Israel gathered themselves together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah" (chaps. 25. 1 ; 28. 3). This was an honour such as had been rendered to some of his predecessors the Judges.

## CHAPTER VII.

## SAMUEL HANDS OVER HIS OFFICE AS JUDGE TO A KING.

IT is a common remark that men more frequently act with dignity in rising to a higher position than in coming down to one that is lower. Thus it was rare grace which enabled the Baptist to reply to the jealous reports brought by his disciples of the growing popularity of the Lord Jesus, "He must increase, but I must decrease." And the glory of Samuel is perhaps most conspicuous when everything which it was possible for a true Israelite and faithful follower of Moses to possess came to him and was concentrated in his hands. It was wonderful that he should then have been able and ready to resign his highest worldly dignity into the hands of another, without looking on him as a rival. Instead of feeling that he was going down before a successful rival, he felt that he was honoured to carry out to its completion that revolution or development, call it which we will, with which his whole life had been mainly concerned, by which the chosen people of Jehovah entered on a course of possible glory and happiness such as made the reigns of David and Solomon the ideals, or the pledges, of all that goodness which Jehovah had promised to bestow upon His people.

In chap. 8. 1, 2, it is recorded that when Samuel was old he made his two sons judges over Israel, and stationed them at Beer-sheba. It may be questioned how far Samuel had the right to do so. Certainly Gideon set a noble example in a similar situation. The people said to him, "Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also"; and he



replied, "I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you : Jehovah shall rule over you " (Judg. 8. 22, 23). Yet Samuel had the same principle in his heart, as he afterwards showed. And though he seemed to act as Gideon refused to do, it may be that he thought of the appointment of his sons as no more than a detail in the administration, regarding them as mere deputies, representatives of their father amid the growing infirmities of age. Anyhow (*v.* 3), they brought shame on his grey hairs ; they turned aside after lucre, taking bribes and perverting judgment. At the same time men so often cry out before they are hurt, that perhaps the people complained more than they had any need to do. For, in his speech as he retired from the labours of office, Samuel appealed to the whole of them to bear witness to the blamelessness of his official life. And this testimony they willingly bore. Now his appeal to them included a reference of the conduct of his sons to the testimony of the complaint of the people ; yet the people uttered not a word against his sons. We cannot feel sure how it was. Only one thing is certain, if his sons were seriously to blame, it would be inexpressibly painful to the aged saint and patriot, reminding him of Eli and his profligate sons.

The matter of chief importance, however, is the immediate result of the misconduct of his sons. "Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together and came unto Samuel to Ramah. And they said unto him : Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways ; now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." This remedy of theirs they pressed over and over again (*v.* 5, 10, 19, 20). Samuel's displeasure at this proposal, and the perseverance with which he resisted it (*v.* 6, etc.), do not indicate personal ambition and disappointment on his part. For he was an aged saint, sated with all that this world could give, and ready to resign

his commission into the hands of his God who had given it to him. But he discerned that he was being deserted by the people in a body, though they had known his consecration to Jehovah from his childhood, and his wise unintermitting devotion to their service. So David was deserted for Absalom (2 Sam. 14. 13 ; 17. 1-4). This was the bitter wrong which Samuel had to endure, and his only relief was prayer. Then Jehovah bore witness to the wrong done to His servant, but pronounced it to be really or essentially a sin against Himself, Samuel's Lord and theirs (see chaps. 8. 6-9 ; 12. 6-19).

How then did it come to pass that Jehovah granted them a king, and bade Samuel make them one? If the sin of the people in asking a king was so plain that they ought to have known and avoided it, how comes it that Deut. 17 contains the law of the kingdom providing for such an emergency as this? In fact, the law is to a considerable extent expressed in language which the people adopted in their address to Samuel.

They said, "Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." The language of Deuteronomy is, "When thou comest into the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say I will set a king over me like as all the nations that are round about me," etc. The law announces conditions or restrictions, but these the people are ready to observe. Such are the following : To set over them him whom Jehovah should choose, and they asked Samuel accordingly to appoint their king ; also to set a brother over them, and not a foreigner, etc. To meet the difficulty by alleging that this law had not yet been written in the age of Samuel is to make an assertion which we deny, and which has only the effect of adding to the difficulty. For if there was no law of God in the way, on what ground then did Samuel object?

The earlier constitution of the commonwealth of Israel was patriarchal; of this system of government the one side was republican, but the other side was monarchical. Moreover, rising above mere human aspects of the situation, clear intimations had been given in Scripture that their commonwealth was essentially a monarchy, with their God as the invisible King. It is written in the Song of Moses (Exod. 15. 18): "Jehovah shall reign for ever and ever." Balaam prophesies (Num. 23. 21): "Jehovah his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them." Less immediately connected with God the King there are the promises to the patriarchs. To Abraham it was said of Sarah (Gen. 17. 6, 16) that she should be the mother of nations, and that kings of peoples should be of her. This is repeated to Jacob, perhaps more definitely (Gen. 35. 11): "A nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins." These and other intimations must have at least led to surmises that the time was coming when Israel should have a king like all the nations, yet with the peculiarity that he should have some special connexion with the God of Israel, whose representative and viceroy their king must be. In fact, when the covenant was first proposed to the people at Mount Sinai, it contained this clause: "And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod. 19. 6). Hence every one of the Israelites was a priest, and a priestly family might and did arise among them. So also every one of them was a king, and some one of them might be singled out to hold the kingly office, and even to found a royal family, when there came to be good reason for this step. It is true that Gideon had refused the offer for himself or his posterity to rule over the people, since Jehovah was to rule over them. There may, however, be a difficulty in the way of pressing this refusal of the throne beyond Gideon's personal feelings, or his conviction of duty at

the time in which he lived. Perhaps there is indistinctness as well as breadth in the terms of his refusal, since the verb he used was *rule* not *reign*. At all events, there was a progress in the direction of consolidation in the administrative arrangements of the Judges. The central authority was growing in strength of prerogative, and also in a tendency to be for life; and there were even circumstances pointing to its possibly becoming hereditary. In the age of Gideon the process was only in one of its early stages, and he felt it incongruous to have a royal leader, still more a hereditary one. Nevertheless, the course of providence led the people forward, naturally and easily, till in Samuel's time they were face to face with the whole development. This explains the utterances of Samuel's mother, and those of the prophet sent to denounce the judgments impending over Eli's house, for both of them spoke of an anointed king, and spoke it openly (chap. 2. 10, 35).

If this be so, there was *essentially* no sin in the desire of the people to have a king. The sinfulness of their request was accidental, connected with the kind of king whom they desired, and in the state of mind in which they desired it. Somehow the earthly king must represent the Heavenly King; this was acknowledged by such successful and mighty kings as David and Solomon (2 Sam. 5. 12; 6. 21, etc.; 1 Kings 3. 6-9; 10. 9). The sin of the people was partly this, that they really desired a king who would stand in an attitude inconsistent with that which he was bound to take up. Thus Samuel faithfully pointed out their sinful expectations, yet tenderly set forth the grace which was ready to forgive and overrule it. "When ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay, but a king shall reign over us, when Jehovah your God was your king. Now therefore behold the king whom ye have chosen, and whom ye have asked for; and behold Jehovah hath set a king over you" (1 Sam. 12. 12, 13).

This was the sin which came out so plainly in Saul's own history, though from a worldly point of view he was by no means a bad ruler ; probably he was vastly better than the contemporary kings of the surrounding countries. It was the same sin which was at work in the hearts of the Jewish people, as well as in that of their princes, until they lost the true characteristics of the kingdom of God, and consummated their ruin by crying out, "We have no king but Cæsar."

There are at least five particulars in which their sin comes to light :

A.—It was not a constitutional king whom they desired, in accordance with that constitution which made Israel singular among the nations, as being the people of whom Jehovah was the king. It is always to be remembered that this sin was not necessarily involved in their request, "Make us a king to judge us like all the nations," since these words occur in the fundamental law of Deuteronomy. Yet it was not unnatural for Samuel to put the sinful construction on their words ; it was the construction which nothing else than a very high measure of divine grace would keep the people from adopting. For often already they had wished in this bad sense to be like all the nations ; was it not so again in the present expression of their wishes ? Certainly the wish continued operative in their minds with ruinous effects, till the age of the prophet Ezekiel. See his words (chap. 20. 32), in the course of a heart-rending review of their national history ; "And that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all ; in that ye say, We will be as the nations, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone."

B.—There was in fact abundant evidence to justify Samuel's anxiety. By God's command he solemnly protested unto them, and showed them the manner of the king that should reign over them (chap. 8. 9-18). Their minds and consciences ac-

cepted what he said on this point as a fair statement of the nature of the kingdom which they expected or wished ; for after hearing him, they refused to obey him, they renewed their request more urgently than before. Now Samuel's statement of "the manner of the king" (chap. 8. 11 ; see also 10. 25, "the manner of the kingdom") comprises various particulars in direct opposition to the Law of God. Thus \* ;—

(1) Verse 14, "He shall take your fields, and your vineyards, and your olive yards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants." Nothing was more distinctly laid down in the Law than that the land was not the property of any man. He could have no more than the use of it, and it was his right and duty to hand it on to his children or other heirs ; the sole proprietor really was Jehovah. Yet Saul practically confessed that he had usurped this power to take possession of the land ; for he asked his servants as they stood around him ; "Hear now, ye Benjamites, will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, and make you all captains of thousands and captains of hundreds, that all of you have conspired against me," etc. (chap. 22. 7, 8). In Ezekiel's vision of the glorious time to come, the prophet says in reference to this evil practice (chap. 46. 18 ; 45. 8), "Moreover the prince shall not take of the people's inheritance by oppression to thrust them out of their possession ; he shall give his sons an inheritance out of his own possession : that My people be not scattered every man from his possession." "In the land shall be his possession in Israel : and My princes shall no more oppress My people : and the land shall they give to

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\* In reading Samuel's indictment of the king who should arise, the Hebrew student observes how, in a simple yet telling manner, the various objects of the wrong-doing are placed first—*v.* 11: "Your sons he will take," etc.; *v.* 13: "Your daughters he will take," etc.; *v.* 14: "Your fields and your vineyards, and your oliveyards he will take," etc.; *v.* 15: "Your seed and your vineyards he will tithe," etc.; *v.* 16: "Your menservants and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses he will take," etc.; *v.* 17, "Your flocks he will tithe," etc.

the house of Israel according to their tribes." Even in the degenerate kingdom of the Ten Tribes, all that the abominable despotism of Ahab and Jezebel could scheme and accomplish was needed before Naboth's vineyard could be taken from him by the king. In 2 Kings 8. 3, 6, we read how the widow and son of a great man, famous in the history of Elisha, went abroad by his advice to escape a time of famine, and how in her absence she was deprived of house and land. They were restored to her through the influence of his name: but the king's appointment of a special officer to effect this object suggests that such injustice was not easily prevented or repaired.

(2) Something is said in *vv.* 11-14, 16, which has a suspicious resemblance to reducing their sons and their daughters to slavery. It was in accordance with the genuine spirit of the Hebrew commonwealth when Solomon raised a levy of bondservants from the Canaanitish races still remaining in the land, while of the children of Israel he made no bondservants (1 Kings 9. 20-22). And yet we read (chap. 11. 28) how he saw that Jeroboam was industrious, and gave him charge over all the labour (R.V. margin, burden) of the house of Joseph.

(3) What is said in verse 15, "He will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants"; and in verse 17, "He will take the tenth of your sheep," is tithe for the king, just as there was tithe for God; it is very like the common practice of heathen kings to make themselves gods to their subjects.

(4) The word translated "his officers," in verse 15, is simply "his eunuchs." It need not be said how frequently these miserable beings are mentioned in the history of the kingdom; nor how explicitly the vile practice of making them is prohibited in the Law of God.

(5) In short, in a very little time the pattern of the kingdom might be traced in the absolute military monarchies of the neighbouring nations ; whereas, if there should come to be an earthly king in that commonwealth which was the kingdom of Jehovah, he ought to have been no more than the foremost among his brethren. To prevent imitation of those despotisms, the sweet word *brother* runs through the Law in Deuteronomy ; besides which, the king was forbidden to multiply horses to himself or greatly to multiply silver and gold. Perhaps more important than even these prohibitions and restrictions, he was to be a pattern of pure family life, he was not to “multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away.” In the flagrant violation of all these safeguards, however, the self-willed people should soon have evidence enough that their kings were as ready to neglect or defy the Law of God as the people themselves had been. Whether the king ever obeyed the Deuteronomic command to write him a copy of this Law in a book, out of the standard copy which was before the priests the Levites, it is impossible to know. Even if he did, it may be doubted whether anything more was effected by this safeguard than to leave a foothold for those who should protest, in the name of Jehovah, that His people had constitutional rights, against which it was unlawful for even the king to plead prescription.

C.—In asking a king at the hands of Samuel, the people looked on this kingdom as a charm which would cure the evils of the state ; much as a preceding generation had applied to Eli for the ark to go with them into the battle and secure the victory over the Philistines. The spirit of the application is the same both times. Both requests were outwardly in harmony with the divine Law under which Israel had been placed ; but the things asked must be rightly used, with humility and repentance and intelligence. The people must



set their trust upon the living God, and with their whole heart they must return to Him whom they had forsaken to their own undoing. Both of these expedients became worse than useless if intelligent faith and repentance were wanting. The people could scarcely forget that Samuel had been a blessing to them all his long public life, a constant friend, a faithful worker and adviser, and, above all, an advocate with God for them amid all their provocations and disasters. Yet the only visible outcome of this life spent for them was that they rolled over on him the duty, if it was a duty, for which they themselves were responsible: "Behold thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways; now make us a king, to judge us like all the nations." Had not Samuel cause to tremble for the future of the people of God whom he must soon leave behind him, as worldly and ungodly and inconsiderate at the end of his course as they had been when he and they first met at Shiloh?

D.—There was indeed one respect in which Samuel had a right to be consulted and taken into account in this transaction, but there is no evidence that it even once entered into the mind of the people. He was in actual possession of the supreme authority among them, called to his high position in a remarkable course of divine providence, accepted heartily by the people, and approved by God and man, as he administered their affairs long and admirably. Assume for the moment that they had evidence that the time had come for resolving to have a king (though really they had no evidence of this), what were they to say of him, and do for him, who was so worthily in possession? It is well known how David felt and acted towards Saul, who had come to occupy a somewhat analogous position to Samuel's, yet less favourable. David was certain that he had received the call to the kingdom from Jehovah, and the anointing for it from His minister. David knew also how he was the object of jealousy

and hatred and persecution at the hand of Saul, who might have been cut down as a cumberer of the ground. Yet David never attempted to snatch the sceptre out of Saul's hand ; on the contrary, he checked every such attempt on the part of others. "Jehovah forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the anointed of Jehovah, to put forth my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of Jehovah" (chap. 24. 6). "Destroy him not. For who can put forth his hand against the anointed of Jehovah, and be guiltless?" (chap. 26. 9). And this course was not due to what is called softness on the part of David ; for while he recognised Saul's position as long as he lived, he lost no time in vindicating his own rights as soon as Saul was dead. Nor did he recognise the pretensions of Abner on behalf of Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, though he put to death the murderers of Ish-bosheth, for slaying a righteous person, when they had expected to be rewarded for killing a rival. The conduct of the people of Israel to Samuel was the opposite of David's conduct to Saul. At this crisis in their history they failed to make any such recognition of the claims of Samuel their judge. In acting thus, they sinned grievously. The testimony of the inspired historian is that "Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life" (chap. 7. 15). Saul himself acknowledged that Samuel had still some right to rule, and the people responded to his acknowledgment (chaps. 11. 7 ; 15. 32-34). The inference from this is, that the people ought to have acted toward Samuel in a manner entirely different—that they were robbing him of that which was his due. If they asked Samuel for a king, they were bound at least to wait his time and way ; since it was for Jehovah to grant their request at such a time, and with such conditions as would have upheld Samuel's rightful position to the end of his life. It was thus that Samuel himself waited on Jehovah, before taking any step in the case

of Saul, and afterwards in that of David (chaps. 9. 16, 17 ; 16. 1-4).

E.—It remains to notice one other indication of the utter worldliness of the people,—their forgetfulness or disregard of their calling to be the people of Jehovah, and to have regard to Him as their true king though He was invisible. They made not a single reference to the spiritual causes which had been at work in bringing all their troubles upon them. The removal of these spiritual causes would be the only cure for the evils under which they groaned. We may indulge this hope that things were substantially better at the close of Samuel's sole administration than at its commencement. Yet, at the best, things were only in a state of transition with the people, and there were some distinct losses. They had lost the central home of their public worship at Shiloh, and the ark, which was the glory of that central home, was wanting. And there were temporary expedients in use until the central glory should be recovered or replaced. This could not be done till Jehovah should reveal His will upon the subject. Shiloh was no longer honoured by His presence. Moreover, it was His sole prerogative to choose a new place, where in future He would cause His name to dwell ; till this His pleasure was made known, it would have been sheer presumption on the part of Samuel, or of the people, to set up a sanctuary in succession to Shiloh. Yet even the theology which presents the highest views of the sovereignty of God, maintains that His sovereign actings are somehow connected with the workings of faith and repentance and love in those who are the subjects of His mercy. But in this crisis with which Samuel had to do, faith and repentance were conspicuously absent from the proceedings of the people, nor was there any exhibition of love.

At a considerably later period, when David proposed to his subjects to unite in bringing the ark out of the hiding place

where it had lain neglected almost continuously from the time at which the Philistines had been compelled to send it back, this was the testimony which he bore (1 Chron. 13. 3) : "Let us bring again the ark of our God unto us : for we sought not unto it in the days of Saul." Only once do we read of the ark (but the Septuagint reads "the ephod") being with Saul and the children of Israel, namely, at the time of Jonathan's marvellous victory over the Philistines ; and it is accompanied by the significant statement, "And Saul built an altar unto Jehovah : the same was the first altar that he built unto Jehovah" (1 Sam. 14. 18, 35). The simplest interpretation of this seems to be, that drawing near to Jehovah by means of sacrifices offered by His appointed priests was the privilege of His assembled people, and yet that Saul had never availed himself of it till now. What a contrast there is between this conduct and the state of mind which led to it, and that of David and his people who brought home the ark, as it pervades Psalm 132. Thus, "Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed ; I will not give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids, till I find out a place for Jehovah, a tabernacle for the Mighty One of Jacob." In the closing verses of one of the long historical psalms (Psalm 78) the connexion is made very close between the catastrophe when the glory went into exile from Israel, and the restoration of regular public worship at its stated centre, when the kingdom also was established at the same centre in the hand of David. Through all that period the process of transition had been moving forwards toward completion. Only in this way could the theocratic kingdom be established, which should bring happiness to the people, as it should conserve the constitution in Israel, according to which Jehovah himself was king. "Moreover, He refused the tent of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim ; but chose the tribe of Judah, the mount

Zion which He loved. And He built His sanctuary like the heights, like the earth which He hath established for ever. He chose David also His servant, and took him from the sheepfolds, from following the ewes that give suck. He brought him to feed Jacob His people and Israel His inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands." Men who do not believe in the reality of this alleged divine administration, who see no controlling forces in the history of Israel of a higher nature than those in the history of other nations, cannot understand the situation ; no amount of learning or acuteness will enable such men to criticise this history satisfactorily. And so, those unbelieving fleshly-minded Israelites, absorbed in the contemplation of outward things, yet destitute of insight into the spiritual causes of their wrong condition, or wanting godliness, firmness, and perseverance to probe the matter to the bottom, were sure to be misled in the scheme of remedies which they proposed to themselves and to Samuel.

Had the demand for a king which they addressed to him been sinful essentially and in its very nature, it would be monstrous to suppose that Jehovah gave Samuel instructions to grant their request, or that Samuel yielded because they were so persistent. An incident in the life of Moses may throw some light on Samuel's attitude of resistance at the first and compliance in the end. It is recorded in Num. 32 that out of the Twelve Tribes who lay encamped on the eastern side of Jordan, ready to cross and conquer their inheritance so soon as the word of command was given, two tribes and a half, who were rich in pastoral possessions, suggested that they might remain where they were and occupy the rich lands which had been taken from the two Amorite kings, Sihon and Og ; Moses was as much distressed at this request as Samuel was at the request for a king. He spoke with passionate earnestness, so as if

possible to dissuade them, as he pointed to the disastrous course of unbelief and provocation of which this unwillingness to cross the Jordan to the wars in Canaan seemed to him the climax. It might indeed have been so; and it was right, probably it was necessary, that he should set their proposal before them from his point of view. Yet his remonstrance to them enabled them to clear up their state of mind to him, and to safeguard their scheme by making certain provisions. They professed their faith, and their willingness to share all hardships and dangers along with their brethren, whose possessions in that original and proper land of Canaan would become so much the larger by the settlement of about a fifth part of the children of Israel on the east of Jordan, while the goodness of Jehovah would be magnified by this expansion of the promised land beyond what they had understood to be its limits. These considerations satisfied Moses. He withdrew his opposition and granted their request, and he gave the appropriate directions to Eleazar and Joshua, who were to be his successors in settling the people in their inheritance. Yet Moses did not part with them till he had offered a last word of caution, in respect of dangers in the path in which, of their own accord, they were about to walk. "If ye will do this thing," etc. "But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against Jehovah; and be sure your sin will find you out." The subsequent history proves the need for this caution, even after they had honourably discharged all their obligations, and had received the parting blessing of Joshua. For it was those tribes beyond Jordan who came to be foremost in apostacy, and who accordingly were the first to be carried away into exile from their own land. Like Moses, Samuel yielded to the new development, acknowledging that it lay within the limits of the constitution, perhaps that it was the best course to adopt, as things now were. Only he faithfully and plainly set before

them the dangers of the path on which they had of their own accord resolved to enter.

Other warnings to the children of Israel concerning the future of their history had been given by Moses, especially in Lev. 26; Deut. 31, 32, and 33. These may have laid a foundation for many a prophetic discourse. Therefore Samuel also soon after "told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book," or, in the book, "and laid it up before Jehovah" (chap. 10. 25), presumably in the receptacle where Moses had laid his Song. For Samuel had said to them in his Master's name (chap. 8. 18), "Ye shall cry out in that day, because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and Jehovah will not answer you in that day." The manner of the kingdom, or of the king, that is, as things ought to have been, may be read in a poetical form as the last words of David describe a ruler (2 Sam. 23. 1-7); and a warning in prose to him is furnished in the prophecy of Nathan (2 Sam. 7. 14, 15). More solemn language occurs at a later time, in Hos. 13. 11, "I gave thee a king in Mine anger, and took him away in My wrath." For the same prophet says (chap. 8. 4), "They have set up kings, but not by Me; they have made princes, and I knew it not; of their silver and their gold have they made them idols, that they may be cut off." (See Note D at the end.)

Samuel's principle was that Israel ought to be a constitutional kingdom, with Jehovah as the unseen King, and with an earthly viceroy appointed under special conditions by the unseen King. The lessons which he gave in the process of constituting Saul their first king had been learned to some extent, as was seen in the history by the time that the kingdom came to David. We read in 2 Sam. 3. 17-21, how "Abner had communication with the elders of Israel," that is, exclusive of the elders of Judah, "saying, In time past ye sought for David

to be king over you ; now then do it : for Jehovah hath spoken of David, saying, By the hand of My servant David I will save My people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies. And Abner also spake in the ears of Benjamin, and Abner went also to speak in the ears of David in Hebron, all that seemed good to Israel, and to the whole house of Benjamin. . . . And Abner said unto David, I will arise and go and will gather all Israel unto my lord the king that they make a covenant with thee, and that thou mayest reign over all that thy soul desireth." Also (chap. 5. 1-3) "then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold we are thy bone and thy flesh. In times past, when Saul was king over us, it was thou that leddest out and broughtest in Israel ; and Jehovah said to thee, Thou shalt feed My people Israel, and thou shalt be leader over Israel. So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron, and king David made a covenant with them in Hebron before Jehovah ; and they anointed David king over Israel." The essential identity of purpose in the three men, Samuel, Saul (at his best), and David, appears in the accounts given of them in these passages. And this might be said also of the summaries given of their respective administrations, in 1 Sam. 7. 13-17 ; 14. 47-52 ; 2 Sam. 8. 1-18. And perhaps in each case we should say that the ideal, as exhibited thus at the beginning of the administration, was better than the realization in the latter part of it.



## CHAPTER VIII.

HOW SAUL WAS THREE TIMES MADE KING BY SAMUEL.

## § 1. Saul made King the first Time.

AS Samuel heard all the words of the people and reported them to Jehovah, so he also reported all the words of Jehovah to the people, just as on an earlier occasion he had reported all the words of Jehovah to Eli. Since they persisted in their demands, notwithstanding all his explanations and warnings, he was instructed by Jehovah to "hearken unto their voice and make them a king" (chap. 8. 22). So he bade them go every man unto his city. In all this Samuel acted especially as the prophet of Jehovah, and so he continued to act. Yet it was impossible to divest himself of his other offices; namely, those of priest and judge; the evidence of which comes out more fully as the narrative proceeds, to tell how Saul was again and again separated for the office of king.

Indeed it was the civil ruler, not the ecclesiastical, whom the people desired Samuel to give them; the king who would fight their battles with enemies abroad, and would administer justice at home. The predominant Hebrew name for this ruler, in the histories of Saul and David, as well as sometimes afterwards, is *Naghid*, that is, one who takes the place in front—a *leader*, as the word is occasionally translated, Isai. 55. 4, etc., and frequently in the margin of the R.V., where the translation in the text is "prince." So 1 Sam. 9. 16; 10. 1; 13.

14; 25. 30; and of David, 2 Sam. 5. 2; 6. 21; 7. 8. So it is applied to Solomon, 1 Kings 1. 35; to Hezekiah, 2 Kings 20. 5; to Jeroboam and Baasha, among the kings of the Ten Tribes, 1 Kings 14. 7; 16. 2.\*

The history of the first meeting of Samuel and Saul, and the consequent anointing, is given in chap. 9. 1—10. 16. Saul was a goodly young man, of stature so commanding that from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people. Yet he spoke with much modesty to Samuel, and said that his tribe, Benjamin, was the smallest of the tribes of Israel. It had been so in the census twice taken by Moses in the wilderness, and it became very much smaller after the disastrous civil war which it waged with the other tribes. And he spoke of his own family as the smallest in this little tribe. Yet his father is described as a mighty man of valour, or of wealth, as in the R.V. margin. And the genealogy of his family is given as carefully as that of Samuel in chap. 1. 1., or that of the priest Ahijah in chap. 14. 3, and that of David in the accompanying booklet of Ruth. Indeed Saul's genealogy is given somewhat more fully in 1 Chron. 8. 29—40; (compare 9. 35—44), though the history of his reign is almost entirely ignored in that book. The loss of his father's she-asses and his own mission in search of them, with the assistance of one who seems to have been a trusty servant, gave the occasion for his meeting with Samuel, who in this chap. 9. 6—8, 10 (his identity being manifest from *v.* 14) receives the distinguished title "the man of God." Though it has already been applied to an unnamed prophet (chap. 2. 27),

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\* There is, however, quite a different word, of which Ezekiel makes large use, which is translated "prince," namely the word very frequently occurring in Numbers for the princes of the tribes. It is also to be observed that the A. V., in ch. 9. 17, uses the ordinary English verb "reign" to describe Saul's office or position; but that this is avoided in the R.V., "have authority"; with which compare the original and also the R.V. at Judg. 18. 7. "possess authority."

it is sparingly applied to other men than Moses until a later age is reached. It is interesting to trace in 1 Kings 13 how "man of God" is the title uniformly given to the unnamed messenger sent by Jehovah out of Judah to confront Jeroboam before his altar at Beth-el; whereas "prophet" is the name always given to the weak or wicked old man who tempted him, though it seems in *v.* 23 to be also given to the man of God from Judah. "Man of God" is the title habitually given also to Elijah and Elisha. This man of God is identified with "the seer" in 1 Sam. 9, 9, 11, 18, 19; and with Samuel in *vv.* 14, 15, etc. The clearness and certainty with which this *seer* saw is made plain in *v.* 6: "There is in this city a man of God, and he is a man that is held in honour; all that he saith cometh surely to pass"; this had been matter of notoriety in all Israel since the occurrence of those events whose beginning is recorded in chap. 3, 19, 20.

There were indeed two agencies which co-operated to bring about this meeting of Samuel and Saul. There were the difficulties in which Saul and his servant found themselves, as is proved by their consultations and by their wavering language; but there was also the secret purpose of Jehovah, who had looked upon His people because their cry was come unto Him (compare Exod. 2, 24, 25, etc.). And the day before Saul and his servant arrived in Samuel's city, Jehovah had revealed to Samuel that He was sending him a man, a Benjamite, who was to be anointed by him as captain (A.V.), prince (R.V.), or leader over Jehovah's people, that he might save them out of the hands of the Philistines.

It has sometimes been imagined that until that day on which they met, Saul did not know Samuel, not even by sight. If that were so, it would indicate a depth of ignorance and brutish ungodliness which would be very surprising in any Israelite contemporary with Samuel, and incredible in the case

of the man selected by Jehovah to succeed Samuel in delivering and ruling His people Israel. Those who accept this imagination must accept also the hypothesis that these accounts of Samuel are purely legendary ; and that in the opinion of the writer of this particular story, Samuel was nothing more than a village diviner, unknown by face or reputation to those who lived in a neighbouring town. But in truth the language of this part of the history shows that it was written by one who was familiar with the other accounts. For instance, it tells that Samuel had a house which was well known, in his own city to which he used to return from work elsewhere, with a well recognised high place, at which he was ready to offer sacrifice immediately on his return home, and to which he had invited apparently the principal people of the city, who were ready to be his guests at the sacrificial feast. The complete command which the writer has of the facts is apparent from the way in which he speaks of Saul's genealogy, and of his personal appearance, of the localities through which Saul and his servant moved about as they wandered in search of the asses ; while yet the name of Samuel's city is not mentioned, inasmuch as this was thoroughly well known to everybody. And there is good reason to infer from the particulars given that both Saul and his servant were familiar with Samuel's history and position and character. The conversation of Saul with his uncle (chap. 10. 14-16) indicates that Samuel was well known to both of them, at the very least by reputation ; and it may suggest that, in this unsettled state of the political atmosphere in Israel, the uncle had some curiosity on the subject of an interview apparently at once cordial and confidential between his nephew and Samuel.

The only circumstance which for a moment might suggest a doubt in some minds as to Saul knowing Samuel is Saul's request to Samuel (*v.* 18) : "Tell me, I pray thee, where the

seer's house is." We cannot indeed be certain that we have the explanation of Saul's conduct when he made this request ; yet it is certainly no proof that he did not know the seer. If any argument can be rested on it, it favours the supposition that he did know him. His language might be prompted by bashfulness, as he thus found an opportunity for conversing with the great man, with an additional reason for shyness owing to the trifle which was all that he could bring as a present. Some may prefer to think that it was only an affectation of ignorance, while in reality he was perfectly well acquainted both with the seer and with his house. This might very well fit in with the extreme depreciation of his own family, at *v.* 21, to which reference has already been made.

Whatever ignorance Saul laboured under, or pretended to labour under, he himself was known to Samuel, if not previously, at all events by a direct revelation the day before. Samuel therefore made a comprehensive reply, which showed that Saul was thoroughly known to him, that his ways and his very thoughts lay naked and opened to the eyes of this seer. This reply made it manifest that Samuel was not ignorant of the trouble in Saul's heart in respect of the asses, but felt for him, and was able and willing to relieve him at once, not playing with his victim, or making money out of him, as a sorcerer might have done, but well aware that there were unspeakably higher objects to which Saul's attention must henceforth be directed. Saul could not be ignorant of the unrest of the people of Israel, though from one cause or another, like many a young man among ourselves in regard to the highest interests of the nation, he had hitherto given little attention to such matters. But from this time forward he was to be in the very centre of the movement.

Samuel had told Saul that he and his servant were invited to join that day in the worship and the feast which followed.

Now he brought them to the guest chamber, and gave them a place at the head of those who were bidden.\*

That Samuel should invite Saul and his servant to be his guests at this sacrificial feast, and to occupy the most honourable places at the table, was a sufficient hint of the high position to which, by the express command of God, he was about to call him. Yet additional emphasis was given to the honour when a special portion was set before Saul, which the cook had been directed to reserve, namely, the thigh and that which was upon it. For the right shoulder (A.V.) or thigh (R.V.) was that part which was given unto the priest for a heave offering out of the sacrifices of their peace offerings (Lev. 7. 32, 33). And "that which was upon it" appears to be the share of the cakes and wafers which by that same law fell as a heave offering to the priest (*vv.* 11-14); compare the position of the cake upon the right thigh of the priest's heave offering (Lev. 8. 25-27).†

This distinguished place assigned to Saul by Samuel at the head of the guests at the sacrificial feast, reminds us of examples more or less closely resembling it, beginning with that of Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, on the day of the covenant at Sinai, when "they beheld God, and did eat and drink" (Exod. 24. 9-11).

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\* See Luke 14. 8-11. The number, thirty, recalls to memory the thirty companions of Samson (Judg. 14, 11). Perhaps David was influenced by recollection of this number when he instituted his order of knighthood, with its thirty members (3 Sam. 23. 24).

† In Lev. 8. 27, 26, "the fat tail" of the ram is mentioned along with the right thigh and the fat, etc., as being waved and burnt upon the burnt offering in the ceremony of consecrating or installing the priests. In consequence of this, a conjecture has been often made by recent critics that there is a corruption in the present Hebrew text, while they are led to propose that "the fat tail" ought to be read instead of "that which is upon it." Professor Driver has an ingenious argument upon the use of the article in this expression of the present text, which he denies to be in use in old Hebrew. This he makes out by *conjecturally* altering the passages in which it meets him, whereas he concedes its use in the later Hebrew. One might not indeed have expected later Hebrew to develop so; for it was largely moulded under the influence of the Aramaic, in which the article does

When the feast was over they came down from the high place, and Samuel upon his own house-top communed with Saul, according to a common practice. No doubt the subject of their conversation was the kingdom and his call to it. So it would be again, when Samuel called him next morning at the spring of the day to converse anew on the house-top; and still a third time, when Samuel was about to send him away, and they went out both of them abroad (*v.* 26). For apart from the kingdom what subject could be particularly interesting and important to them both? The lost asses would scarcely have been such a subject; or if we could persuade ourselves that the asses might have been the subject, why should his servant have been so carefully bidden to pass on before, while Samuel kept Saul standing where he was, that he might let him hear the word of God? It was then that Samuel, acting in the name of Jehovah, anointed him to be prince, or leader, over His inheritance. And to this act Samuel attached high importance, as appears from his reference to it in the last charge which he gave to him, to execute the vengeance of Jehovah against the Amalekites (*chap.* 15. 1, 17).

This anointing undoubtedly was the emblem and pledge of the gift of the Spirit of God. Aaron and his sons had been anointed thus for the office of the priesthood, just as the tabernacle and its vessels had been anointed to be ready for these priests to use. And now the prince of Jehovah's inheri-

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not exist, its purpose being attained by a different contrivance. However, apart from that debateable point, the noun "fat tail" is known to us in the Bible only by its occurrence in the following five passages:—*Exod.* 29. 22; *Lev.* 3. 9; 7. 3; 8. 25; 9. 19; in all of which the fatness that is distinctive of the tail in the Syrian sheep is essential to the meaning. Now it was a deep-seated principle in the Jewish worship that the people were to eat neither fat nor blood (*Lev.* 3. 16), and so this fat tail is mentioned in these five passages as being burnt along with the other fat pieces of the ram. This is, therefore, the very portion which it was impossible that Samuel should have given to Saul to eat, and which Saul could not have accepted at his hand. Plainly the carelessness of Eli's sons as to burning the fat, and not improbably their taking some of the fat pieces for themselves to eat, had been shocking to the Israelites as they worshipped (*ch.* 2. 16).

tance, the king over His people, was admitted to office by the same right. There has no evidence been adduced that even suggests any difference between the two anointings. And when it is said, according to the accurate rendering in the R.V., that Samuel took *the* vial of oil, one cannot but think of the oil that was kept in the sanctuary for this very purpose of anointing. So it is said (1 Kings 1. 39, 45), "And Zadok the priest took the horn of oil out of the tent, and anointed Solomon . . . . Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet have anointed him king in Gihon." And so in regard to David, who was to take the place of Saul, when he had been rejected by Jehovah (1 Sam. 16. 1), "Jehovah said unto Samuel . . . . Fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Beth-lehemite, for I have provided me a king among his sons"; and so the narrative proceeds, *vv.* 3, 12, 13; see more of this anointing 2 Sam. 2. 4, 7; 5. 3. Hence comes the common name for Saul, The anointed of Jehovah (chaps. 12. 5; 24. 6, 10; 26. 9, 16; 2 Sam. 1. 14, 16). Even Absalom was anointed (2 Sam. 19. 10), though in some unlawful way of which there is no record.\*

In this process of anointing, Samuel appears predominantly in his office as prophet; the narrative therefore goes on to exhibit the working of his prophetic foresight. It was unavoidable that Saul should part from him who had anointed and kissed him, but he was not bidden to go forth unsupported on his new path of life. Far from this, three signs were foretold as about to be given to him, for his direction and encouragement

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\* It is interesting to read of the triple commission entrusted to Samuel's great successor, Elijah, to anoint Hazael to be king of Syria, so as to scourge the degenerate people of Jehovah (compare "Nebuchadnezzar My servant," Jer. 27, 6; 43. 10), and Jehu to be king of the Ten Tribes, so as to root out the royal house of Ahab, and Elisha to be his own coadjutor in his strange prophetic office (1 Kings 19. 15-17). Still more interesting is it to read how "Cyrus Mine anointed," a heathen prince, receives the commission to rebuild Jerusalem and to restore the worship at the Temple (Isai. 44. 28; 45. 1).



(1 Sam. 10. 2-7). *First*, he should meet two men at a place of historical interest, the sepulchre of Rachel, the ancestress of the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim and Benjamin ; and they should tell him that the asses had been found, and that now the anxiety at home was in regard to himself. Thus his mind was set free from inferior cares ; of these things he was relieved, that he might concentrate all his powers of mind upon the things of the kingdom. *Secondly*, as he went on farther, and came to the oak or terebinth of Tabor,\* he should meet three men going up to God to Beth-el, carrying all the materials for a sacrificial feast there ; and they would give a small part to Saul, which he was to receive at their hands, possibly with a hint that he was to receive it as graciously as Samuel had received his fourth of a shekel. Those two first signs in some sense repeated what he had already received from Samuel's own hand in a nobler form. Yet there was a value in the repetition. Not only did it impart emphasis, in accordance with the lesson from the doubling of Pharaoh's dream, as Joseph drew the inference for him : it was also an echo of what Samuel had done, fitted to convince Saul that there was a movement among the people of Israel, consciously or unconsciously, towards himself, of the kind which Samuel had

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\* There are many geographical details in this narrative, as also in other portions of this book, in regard to which our knowledge is very defective. It is possible that this oak or terebinth of Tabor, apparently standing between Ramah, where he had just been with Samuel, and Beth-el, whither he was going, brought to his remembrance the great prophetess Deborah and her companion the judge Barak. For Deborah judged Israel as she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah, between Beth-el and Ramah (Judg. 4. 4, 5). And though we know nothing of any Tabor other than the mountain in Galilee, yet this oak of Deborah may have received its name in honour of that mountain, to which she had sent Barak back that he might achieve his marvellous victory over the oppressors of his country. If this were so, then both of these signs came to Saul at interesting historical localities. And the third sign, given to him at the hill of God, beside the garrison of the Philistines, also near to a city with a high place which did not need any description, may safely be connected with Beth-el, a spot thoroughly well-known, and still more interesting, of which more must yet be said. Many interesting papers on the subject of this topography have appeared in the *Palestine Exploration Quarterly Statement*.

revealed to him. And these signs were meant to produce an effect upon Saul. Accordingly, whereas he met these men as they were going up to God, to Beth-el, he turned with them, or he followed in the same direction. The geography includes details of which there may be points not yet clear; but the general description in *vv.* 3, 5, 13, presents no difficulty. It is not to be overlooked that the number of men brought in contact with Saul in these three signs was ever increasing; first two, then three, and lastly a company or band. But the growing importance of the signs is still more worthy of remark; for the *third* sign was his meeting with a band of prophets coming down from the high place with their instruments of music, they themselves prophesying all the time. And oh, the wonder! The Spirit of Jehovah would then come mightily upon him, the verb being quite a technical expression in the history of Samson; a holy impulse would take possession of him and fit him for the work for which at the same time it gave him a desire (*Judg.* 14. 6, 19; 15. 14). Just so the Spirit again came upon Saul as he was about to deliver Jabesh-Gilead (*chap.* 11. 6); and so also upon David, but probably in permanence, when Samuel had anointed him to be king (*chap.* 16. 13).<sup>\*</sup> And this influence of the Spirit upon him turned him into another man, so that he actually joined the band and prophesied among them (*compare vv.* 6, 9, 10). This is what divines have often called experimental evidence, which transcends any arguments for the truth of God from other sources, even the most remarkable; it is like the proof to the five thousand, who not merely saw our Lord's miracle, but themselves ate of the loaves and fishes. This experimental evidence

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<sup>\*</sup> It is proper to notice that the same verb is used for the corresponding awful evil influence, that of the evil spirit (or of the Spirit of God acting for evil) sent from God upon Saul when the Spirit of God forsook him (*ch.* 18. 10).

strikes multitudes who have resisted all other evidence ; for instance, many are deeply impressed with the truth of Christianity when they see that a man, who professes to have given himself to the Saviour, forsakes all his careless and evil ways, and finds himself henceforth able to live a sober, righteous, and godly life, in faith on his Redeemer, and in love to Him and to all men, specially to his fellow Christians. Something remarkable was seen in Saul, and felt by him. People looked and listened, and they wondered what kind of father or head there was to this band of prophets, of whom so unpromising a recruit as Saul had become one ; and they asked, "Is Saul also among the prophets ?" And yet those expositors may be in the right who take into account the sad history of his fall and of his latter life, which gave occasion to the repetition of the question, perhaps in a bitter spirit. This occurred when for the last time he felt a strange overwhelming influence coming on him from Samuel direct, and made some attempt to prophesy, though we need not profess to determine exactly what this was once more (chap. 19. 24). These interpreters reckon that a hint is given of the imperfection and superficiality of the change in his character, since it is said, "Thou shalt be turned into *another* man," and "God gave him \* *another* heart," as if avoiding the more decisive expressions, "a *new* man," "a *new* heart."

However this may be, all was done for Saul that he could have expected, and probably more than his heart desired. By the mouth of Samuel Jehovah had given him the promise of the kingdom, and with it of all that could be desired (chap. 9. 20, 21). He had these three guiding and encouraging signs, each rising higher than the one before it, till he was admitted into the fellowship of the prophets, and shared in their prophesying.

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\* Literally, "turned to him." Compare Zeph. 3. 9.

He came to the high place, and there he was an object of astonishment and admiration to all who met him. And if there were already in him the seeds of that jealous and arrogant disposition, which was a prime factor in accomplishing his ruin, what more could he have wished, in order to dissolve its evil elements and to render it harmless, than the Spirit of God who came thus mightily upon him, and secured for him that untrammelled freedom of action in which he delighted; Samuel said to him, "Let it be, when these signs are come unto thee, that thou do as occasion serveth thee, for God is with thee" (chap. 10. 7). In Hebrew these last words, "God is with thee," are equivalent to Immanuel. This most glorious title of the Son of David, the promised Saviour, in the highest language of later prophecy, was put within Saul's reach, if only he would take it and use it.\*

The untrammelled liberty of God's people, within the wide limits of His Fatherly law, to do as occasion serves them, takes for granted that they are resolved to act according to the intimations from Him in their changed hearts which He has given them (see Ezek. 11. 19, 20). This consideration may furnish the simplest explanation of chap. 10. 8, a passage which many commentators have felt difficult, some of them even claiming it as a demonstration of the fragmentary and inconsistent nature of the documents from which the present Book of Samuel was compiled. The text as it stands need excite no sense of perplexity in the mind which remembers

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\* If one wishes to translate the Hebrew text with the utmost precision at v. 5, the verb in the jussive or optative may indicate that Samuel made a difference between the first two signs and the third, throwing into it his prophetic self as an element: "And let it be, when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a band of prophets." Or, if we retain the translation, "And thou shalt meet," then the *apodosis* of the sentence would be at the beginning of v. 6, thus: "And let it be that the Spirit of Jehovah shall come-mightily upon thee." The marginal renderings of v. 7 in the R. V. are the more exact translations, a little rugged but very striking: "And it shall come to pass, that when these signs are come unto thee, do for thee as thine hand shall find."

chap. 7. 16, 17, where the brief comprehensive statement of Samuel's manner of life in his administration is given. Beth-el and Gilgal and Mizpah were the three places which Samuel visited every year regularly, making a circuit to them, and judging Israel in each of them ; but his return was to Ramah, for there was his house ; and there he built an altar for what therefore must have been his stated worship. It was at his own house at Ramah, by what men call an accident, that he had met with Saul and anointed him. From Ramah he had sent him to Beth-el, in the immediate vicinity of which one of these three signs took place ; next, in this *v.* 8, he sent him to Gilgal, of which there remains much more to be said ; and afterwards, as will immediately appear, he met with him at the third place, Mizpah (chap. 10. 17-24). But it is safe to infer from the silence of the narrative that Saul did not go straight down to Gilgal, as he had been commanded by Samuel to do ; in short, that he began that course of disobedient self-will which ended in his ruin ; nevertheless, with great kindness and forbearance, at a later time Samuel did arrange to meet Saul and bring him and the people to Gilgal (chap. 11. 14, 15).

There were several reasons for Samuel's wish to bring Saul and the people together at all these three places. The most obvious reason is, that these were the places where Samuel regularly judged Israel, where therefore he would have most naturally and easily transferred his authority to the king with the consent of all the parties, and the enthusiasm with which he might hope that Jehovah would fill His people as they were assembled before Him. It is not an easy matter to effect a bloodless revolution in which a whole nation shall heartily unite ; and in spite of difficulties thrown in the way by Saul, Samuel was successful in virtue of his rare tact and his self-effacement, along with qualities belonging essentially to him as the "man of God" he was. Another reason for being with

Saul at all these three places, perhaps not so obvious, yet not less important, is that this might secure for the revolution a thoroughly theocratic character according to the will of Jehovah and the Law which He had given to Israel. For the central worship had been disorganised ever since the disastrous day on which the ark had been carried into exile ; and Samuel, in virtue of his supreme authority, resembling that of Moses, had made perhaps the nearest approach possible at the time to a centre of worship at his own house. But he had also selected these three places, like props or buttresses to a feeble dwelling ; to these all Israel were to come to be judged by him in circuit. It has already been noted that these three places were too near each other to be convenient for holding circuits in the sense of the term to which we are now accustomed, that is, so as to spread the administration of justice somewhat equally over all the land and, comparatively speaking, at their own doors. Israel must come to him, not he must go to them. Now Israel were required by the Law to come together three times in the year, all their males appearing before Jehovah at His sanctuary ; and this according to what is reckoned by strict critical authorities to be the earliest legislation (Exod. 23. 14-17 ; 34. 18-23). These three places were known to have a historical religious character, as has been seen, which fitted them to hold a sort of temporary sacred position instead of the desecrated Shiloh. How would Samuel most readily succeed in bringing all the males in Israel before him for judgment ? Why should he think of doing so just three times in the year ? Plainly he had this law in his mind, endeavouring to secure for it such respect and obedience as were attainable in that disordered time, and he would find it easy and natural to gather the people together in proportion as he leavened them with living godliness : see what is recorded in chaps. 2. 18-21 ; 3. 19-21 ; 7. 2-17.

And here is the simplest possible explanation of Samuel's

saying to Saul, "And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal; and behold I will come down unto thee to offer burnt-offerings and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings; seven days shalt thou tarry till I come unto thee and show thee," literally make thee to know "what thou shalt do." Two out of the three annual feasts before Jehovah lasted seven days. Samuel in his usual course expected to come down to Gilgal for one or other of these two feasts, and to be engaged the seven days in public duties with the people, such as judging them (Deut. 17. 8-13). During these seven days Saul was to tarry for Samuel, even if he should be late of coming; he might be learning much, if he chose, even if he should be kept waiting. Not later than at the end of the seven days, said Samuel, I will "come unto thee and make thee know what thou shalt do." But there is no proof that Samuel thought of keeping Saul waiting. He changed the verb from that which he had used twice in the earlier part of the verse; it is no longer *go* (or *come*) *down*, for he would already have done this coming down there: it is simply *coming* from one part of Gilgal to another, or to put it otherwise, from attending to the people through the seven days of the feast, to attending to Saul as an individual. The later history of Saul (chap. 13. and onwards) lets every one see how far Saul afterwards went astray in planning for himself what he was to do. If his life had exhibited the right sequence, judging and doing what he ought under the guidance of the Spirit working on him, the first step in this blessed sequence would have been doing promptly what he was here commanded to do, namely, going down to Gilgal before Samuel, there to wait the seven days for him. This step Saul did not take: either he refused through a spirit of high-handed self-assertion, or he neglected and was careless of those divine concerns in which he was not really interested—the things of the kingdom of God. Anyhow he was disobedient to this command. He did not go down to Gilgal.

This explanation of Saul's not going down to Gilgal before Samuel is in entire harmony with what is recorded of his conduct when his uncle asked him and his servant, "Whither went ye?" Saul took it upon him to answer for both, and replied, "To seek the asses; and when we saw that they were not found we came to Samuel." Samuel at that time was by far the most important person in Israel, the civil and practically, if not technically, the spiritual head of the commonwealth, yet with his door open to the humblest Israelite who sought his aid. The visit of Saul to Samuel, and the very remarkable reception accorded to him by Samuel, could not but excite general attention and curiosity, all the more because in that reception there was something of mystery, such as could not be accidental or unmeaning. The uncle addressed his next question to Saul alone, perhaps after taking him apart from the servant or any other witness, "Tell me, I pray thee, what Samuel said unto you." Had Saul rightly understood the case, what reason was there for hiding his anointing from his own family, any more than for David hiding his anointing from his own family? But Saul avoided the whole subject. He did indeed say to his uncle, "He told us plainly that the asses were found." However, the sacred writer continues, "But concerning the matter of the kingdom whereof Samuel spake, he told him not." Certain very special circumstances, like those related in Jer. 38. 24-28, may justify such partial concealment. One might imagine something specially unsympathetic or otherwise repelling in the character of Saul's uncle, which made Saul unwilling to speak of the momentous matter to him; even if so, it goes to justify the estimate of the unspiritual character of Saul's family which those had formed who were surprised to see him among the prophets. If Saul had been a man after God's own heart, like David (see 1 Sam. 13. 14; Acts 13. 21, 22), and if he and his family had been in



sympathy with Samuel and the godly in Israel on this great central subject, what a king might this first anointing by Samuel have given to Israel! But such a result could have been attained only if Saul had had spiritual understanding of the working of the Spirit of God upon him,\* as the Spirit came mightily upon him, and turned him into another man. If Saul had then done as occasion served him, God being with him (to use Samuel's language of direction to him), and if he had obeyed the special command, "Go down before me to Gilgal," etc., then he would have shared in the blessings upon Israel as the congregation of Jehovah gathered for the feast and sacrifices of His assembled people; and he would have had efficacious instruction and guidance from the prophet for his own individual use. Alas for the failures of those who might have had guidance and support so as to become channels of blessing to the world! Compare the prophet's passionate regret that Israel had not acted more wisely (Isai. 48. 17-19), and the Psalmist's (Psalm 81. 11-16).†

## § 2. Saul made King the second Time.

Another channel was opened along which the gracious purposes of Jehovah might run towards their fulfilment. Saul

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\* Compare Elijah testing the spiritual character and discernment of Elisha (1 Kings 19. 20).

† Four Hebrew words are translated "kingdom"; a fifth, which is the Aramaic form of one of these, is used in the books of Ezra and Daniel and may for the present be left out of account. One of these, *mal'chuth*, occurs only once in the books of Samuel (1 Sam. 20. 31), in Saul's reproach to Jonathan, and *maml'chuth* only in 1 Sam. 15. 28; 2 Sam. 16. 3. It is the remaining two which are chiefly in use. The one in this passage, *m'luchah*, (1 Sam. 10. 16) is found also in v. 25 (different from the noun in v. 18); 11. 14; 14. 47; 18. 8. Perhaps it suggests the notion of royalty or majesty, thus 2 Sam. 16. 8; 2 Kings 25. 25, and "the seed royal," Jer. 41. 1, as also in Ezek. 17. 13, R.V., and "royal city" in 2 Sam. 12. 26; "a royal diadem," Isa. 62. 3. The employment of this noun here may therefore suggest that Saul avoided all reference to those great constitutional questions which occupied the mind of Samuel on account of the state of disquiet and unrest which at that moment prevailed throughout the tribes of Israel. The commonest is *mamlachah*.

had disobeyed the commandment to go down before Samuel to Gilgal. Obedience to this commandment would have given the due opportunity for his being anointed a second time, this time in presence of the whole assembled congregation of Israel. But since he did not go down, another course still remained open to Samuel: for he was in the habit of meeting Israel yearly at Mizpah also, and judging them there. Therefore he called the people together unto Jehovah to Mizpah. There he reproached them for despising the true Saviour of Israel, who nevertheless was with them still, as He had been from the time that He had brought them up out of Egypt until now. Indeed, the original makes the charge of sin very direct and personal by the use of the pronouns. It might be translated so as to bring this out in English "I myself brought you up"; "Ye yourselves have this day rejected your God, who is Himself saving you," etc. Yet since they were resolved to have it so, Jehovah, who had so often saved them by a judge whom He had raised up in an emergency, would gratify them with the gift of a permanent human ruler. When Samuel first dealt with them on the subject of the kingdom, his official actings had been chiefly those of a prophet. On this second occasion, though His prophetic working continued, as is proved by his address to them, it is the office of the priest which becomes prominent. He who charged their sin home upon them no doubt offered sacrifice for them, as he would have done at Gilgal had Saul obeyed him and gone down thither (chap. 10. 8). Samuel also brought in the sacred lot; though we are not told whether this was done by himself directly, or whether through the Urim and Thummim of the high priest, of which we read later in Saul's history (chap. 14. 3, 18, 19, 36-42), and often in the history of David with the priest Abiathar. By means of this lot Saul was selected for the kingdom within an ever-narrowing circle, as when Achan had

been publicly made known as the thief of the devoted things at Jericho (Josh. 7. 13-18).\* When Saul was taken, he displayed the fickleness or indecision which appears in combination with his self-will and his jealousy of all interference with him. A further inquiry needed to be addressed to Jehovah, in order to bring out the fact "Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff." Yet, when he had been brought forth by the eager people, he at once attracted the attention of all by his commanding stature (chap. 10. 23); and thus the impression was repeated which had already been made on the former occasion, when he had been seen by Samuel and his little company (chap. 9. 2).†

Thus Saul was announced to the whole of the assembled tribes as "him whom Jehovah hath chosen," agreeably to the law in Deut. 17. 15. And this became a well-known designation of Saul, "the chosen of Jehovah" (2 Sam. 21.<sup>6</sup>, R.V. and A.V. margin). Thus, when Saul was set aside, Jehovah sent Samuel to Jesse's household in Beth-lehem, saying, "I have provided Me a king among his sons," "Anoint unto Me him whom I name unto thee," etc. (see chap. 16. 1,<sup>3</sup>, 8, 10-12). Of course Saul had been already virtually chosen by Jehovah at the time of his first meeting with Samuel (chaps. 9. 16, 17; 10. 1). On this second occasion, when he was chosen by lot at Mizpah, there is no mention of the ceremony of anointing, though it is perhaps probable that it took place. If he was not anointed at Mizpah, we are thrown back on that earlier anointing as having taken place and been sufficient; and the critical suppositions that there are two

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\* In that case Carmi, the link before Achan, is not named, and in this case the link before Saul in the Hebrew text is omitted. The Septuagint, however, supplies it; and Dr. H. P. Smith follows some preceding commentators in affirming that the clause is necessary to the sense and ought to be inserted.

† This commanding bodily appearance nearly led Samuel astray at a later time when he took notice of David's elder brother Eliab (chap. 16. 7.)

independent traditions of these events must be discarded. "The anointed of Jehovah" had been an expression in the mouth of Samuel's mother, and in the mouth of the prophet sent to Eli (chap. 2. 10, 35). It may very well be that the reference to Saul's anointing in chap. 15. 1, is to this meeting at Mizpah: "And Samuel said unto Saul, Jehovah sent me to anoint thee to be king over His people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of Jehovah." And so he sent him to execute vengeance upon the Amalekites. This title, "the anointed of Jehovah," was that which was believed most technically to designate Saul's official position, if we may judge from David's use of it habitually for Saul (see chaps. 24. 6, 10; 26. 9, 11, 23, already mentioned).

The people looked at the majestic stature of Saul, as he towered from his shoulders upward above the whole of them, and they accepted him with the shout "God save the king!" or, as the Hebrew literally is, "Let the king live!" Yet before Samuel sent them away, every man to his house, like a faithful messenger from Jehovah as he was, and still the head of the commonwealth, since he united in himself all the forms of grace bestowed on its officials, he "told the people the manner of the kingdom," that is, the royal position, its prerogatives and duties, the Hebrew term being the same as in *v.* 16, "and wrote it in a book," or in *the* book, and "laid it up before Jehovah" (see *v.* 25). For this was the suitable outcome of his solemn dealing with them, as recorded in chap. 8; and this he preserved in a permanent written form, to be laid up before Jehovah, who was at once their God and their King invisible. It is a discussion of long standing whether our definite or our indefinite article better represents the Hebrew article in this passage and in Exod. 27. 14. With this discussion it is not necessary to meddle at present. If Moses and Samuel wrote these things in *the* Book, this is

the most strikingly distinct attestation that can well be expected to be given to the written word of God, preserved as a sacred possession of His people, and added to from time to time; compare the words which Joshua spoke to the people and wrote in the book of the Law of Jehovah (Josh. 24. 26). Yet any one who prefers the indefinite article, as in the English Bible, is not in the least committed to the contrary opinion, and may hold that the same meaning is conveyed by his translation, though less pointedly.

One circumstance in the history remains as evidence that Samuel's teaching was the veritable Word of God, which, like the personal Word, is ever "set for the falling and rising up (again, A.V.) of many in Israel" (Luke 2. 34). When the services at Mizpah were over, and Samuel sent the people away, every man to his house, Saul also had gone to his house (the Hebrew favours our pluperfect tense), that is, to Gibeah, "Gibeah of Saul," as it is named (Isai. 10. 29), and repeatedly in this book (11. 4, etc.); "And there went with him the host, whose hearts God had touched," bringing them into sympathy with their king (see chap. 10. 6, 9, 10). For God's word never returns to Him void; and Samuel's message inclined some, possibly the vast majority, to manifest the heartiness of their allegiance to the king whom Jehovah had strikingly pointed out to them. But, as is also always the case, there were those who contradicted and blasphemed. They were sons of Belial, or worthlessness. They were guilty, like the rest, of distrusting or rejecting Jehovah, who had been and still was their Saviour; but, going far beyond the rest, they added a presumptuous sin of their own. For when Jehovah had condescended to the sinful weakness of His tribes, and had given them a human king and Saviour at their urgent request, these men rejected him also, with the sneering question, "How shall this man save

us?" Happy had it been for Saul if he had always had the restraint upon his spirit which that day led him to hold his peace. In the emphatic and accurate language of the R.V. margin, "He was as though he had been deaf," even while these men let it be seen that they despised him, as they brought him no present. Why did he not always claim fulfilment of the promise Samuel had virtually given him? (chap. 10. 7).

### § 3. Saul made king the third time.

There can be no revolution more satisfactory than one which is at the same time thorough and bloodless, and this was the character of the revolution which Samuel effected in Israel. It was indeed a revolution. For in the loose, free constitution of the Twelve Tribes every man did that which was right in his own eyes. In an emergency Jehovah raised up a judge to save His penitent people. But by this act of God, through Samuel, it was transformed into a monarchy, with strange tendencies towards heathenish despotism, as was fully explained to the people before they adhered finally to their resolution in its favour. And when Samuel made this concession to their resolute demands, he did not do so without faithfully warning them that their conduct was sinful; yet not so much as one life was lost in the process of making this great constitutional change. The chief causes of a result so singularly happy have come out in the study of the course of events. *First*, and above all, there was the gracious and long-suffering dealing of Jehovah. *Secondly*, there was the provision for this possible adjustment which He had made from the beginning, that in certain circumstances a kingdom might, so to speak, be superinduced upon the commonwealth. *Thirdly*, the care of the whole

movement was in the hands of a man so gifted in every way for the work of God as Samuel was; a man, too, who was a model of wisdom, love, and self-denial in his dealings with the stiff-necked people, as Moses often called them, and psalmists and prophets after Moses. Especially in his prophetic office, Samuel had prepared the people by thorough, careful, sustained discipline and training (see chaps. 7 and 8). Thus Jehovah communicated beforehand to him that Saul was to be the king whom he was to anoint, while, by means of a remarkable coincidence in the events directed by God's providence, Saul was brought by his own private affairs to Samuel, and was led to submit to him and to receive the anointing and instruction, this transaction being comparatively in secret. Provision was next made for its being repeated openly at Gilgal, before Jehovah and all the people. But since Saul did not go down to Gilgal before Samuel and wait for him, whatever might be the cause of this disobedience, whether self-will, or negligence, or fickleness, or whether reasons which cannot now be ascertained, Samuel called the people together unto Jehovah to Mizpah, as has been said, Saul being one of the people; there Samuel cast the sacred lot, his priestly character predominating this time. He thus confirmed, in presence of the assembled tribes, the secret purpose of God, which had hitherto been revealed to no one but himself. Next Samuel dragged Saul out of his hiding, and publicly proclaimed him to be the chosen of Jehovah. Upon this the people received Saul as their king with acclamation.

There was room, perhaps one should say there was need, for a third transaction, so that the people might more positively or actively take part in the appointment of the king, and might more explicitly declare that he was chosen by them as well as by Jehovah. This transaction took place where it ought to have taken place before, and would

have taken place but for Saul's disobedience, at Gilgal (compare chaps. 10. 8; 11. 12-15), after Saul's first exploit in saving Israel, which drew the hearts of all the people to him. In this third appointment of Saul to be king, Samuel acted more especially in his third office, of judge, the supreme civil ruler of Israel. When Saul was commanding his subjects throughout all the borders of Israel to assist him in saving Jabesh-gilead, he summoned them, under the highest penalties, to come "after Saul and after Samuel," the new and the old ruler being placed by him upon the same level (chap. 11. 7). And when the deliverance had been achieved, and the people, flushed with victory, were ready to put to death those who had not approved of the selection of Saul, it was to Samuel that they addressed their complaints: "Who is he that said, Shall Saul reign over us?" (v. 12).\*

The Philistines had been at the first named to Samuel as the enemies of Israel with whom Saul would have to struggle if he would save Israel (chap. 9. 16); and this continued to be so all his life. So far had the condition of Israel retrograded since the happy days of Samuel's administration as described in chap. 7. 13. Yet on earlier occasions the Philistines had been found acting in concert with enemies on the opposite side of Palestine—for instance, with the Midianites and with the children of Ammon (Judg. 6. 1-4; 10. 7); and it might well be that they were in alliance with Nahash the Ammonite in the attack on Jabesh-gilead. Saul's later exploits showed that the enemies of Israel, with whom he was compelled to fight, encircled him round and round (chap. 14. 47-52). The victory, which

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\* Nor does Samuel seem ever to have renounced his authority as judge. It mingled with the prophetic authority in the command to Saul to destroy the Amalekites; in the divine sentence which he pronounced deposing Saul from the kingly office; and in hewing Agag in pieces before Jehovah (chap. 15. 1-4, 22-29, 32, 33). And probably it was so in Samuel's anointing of David to be king (chap. 16. 1-13).



was the immediate cause of the third acknowledgment of Saul as king, was over Nahash the Ammonite, when he had made the barbarous proposal to bore out the right eyes of all the men of Jabesh-gilead, by way of a reproach upon all Israel. He had been already known as bent on mischief (see chap. 12. 12). The men of Jabesh obtained seven days' respite, ostensibly that they might send messengers unto all the borders of Israel, if perchance some of their brethren would come and save them. In reality there could scarcely have been time for this process; and the citizens sent their messengers straight to the village or little town, entirely obscure hitherto, so far as is known, where the newly-appointed king lived. Here was an occurrence and an appeal which would put Saul to the test. He stood the test admirably. At the moment of the messengers' arrival he was coming in from the field, following the oxen, as shortly before he had been scouring the country to recover his father's she-asses. He asked why he saw all the people in tears, and, as soon as he learned the reason, he summoned the entire nation with the utmost stringency to follow him and Samuel. For the Spirit of Jehovah had come mightily upon him, as on an earlier occasion (see chap. 10. 6, 10). He felt the call to him to save Israel as the judges used to do, and his anger was kindled greatly. It was a singularly effective measure which he adopted to rouse all Israel and fill them with feelings like his own, when "he took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces, and sent them throughout all the borders of Israel by the hand of the messengers."\*

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\* It is unfortunate that in the English version the article is omitted. In virtue of his royal authority, the very messengers who had come to him were sent on by him throughout all the borders of Israel, to which they had obtained permission from Nahash to send, and had not availed themselves of it. The difference between the noun with and without the Hebrew article is manifest in *vs.* 3, 4, 7.

When Saul commanded the people to come after himself and Samuel, on pain of the oxen of every traitor suffering in this same manner, he may have borrowed the idea from what is recorded in Judg. 19. 29—20. 11; though in borrowing he stripped that pattern action of its repulsive features. It is quite of subordinate importance whether Bezek, his appointed place of meeting, is the same as the place mentioned in the earlier war with Adoni-bezek (Judg. 1. 4—7). The name does not occur elsewhere; perhaps this was an ancient town which disappeared in a later age. Of more importance is the fact that Saul's enthusiasm met with a response which secured complete success: "the dread of Jehovah fell on the people, and they came out as one man." The message of encouragement was sent to the men of Jabesh that they should have deliverance the next day; and they did have it so thoroughly that their enemies were killed or scattered, and not even two of them were left together.

Elated with their success, which we need not doubt they ascribed to the goodness of God, the people asked Samuel who the man was who had said, "Shall Saul reign over us?" For they proposed to put any traitors to death on the spot. No doubt they referred to those sons of Belial whose language and conduct are reported at chap. 10. 27. But Saul, who had been as a dumb man then, was now emboldened to speak out, and with royal authority forbid that any man should be put to death that day on which Jehovah had wrought salvation, or deliverance, for Israel. The Hebrew noun, which is variously translated *help*, *deliverance*, and *salvation* in *vv.* 9, 13, corresponds to the verb translated *save* in *v.* 3 and in chap. 10. 19, 27.

Such feelings as moved the people to propose that these men should be put to death are sometimes very dangerous, unless a better outlet is found for the pent-up enthusiasm.

There was much heavenly wisdom in Samuel's mode of dealing with these feelings. He called to mind how Saul ought to have gone down before him to Gilgal after their first meeting, which had been in secret, and he proposed to the people that they—that is, all Israel led by himself—should go to Gilgal now and renew the kingdom there. The happiest results attended his proposal and the hearty acquiescence of the people in it. "All the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before Jehovah in Gilgal, and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace offerings before Jehovah," as Samuel had in chap. 10. 8 directed Saul to do. No wonder that it is added now, "and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly" (chap. 11. 15). Whether Samuel repeated the anointing on this third occasion is not stated; however that might be, immediately after (chap. 12. 3, 5) he names him "the anointed of Jehovah."

The revolution had been accomplished most successfully. Yet Samuel had not completed the task that he had assigned to himself, which he felt it his duty to perform, till he had again addressed the people on the subject of their sin and on the need for the utmost humility and earnestness in the new situation in which they had insisted on placing themselves. In acting thus, Samuel trode in the footsteps of Moses at Mount Sinai (see Exod. 19; 24. 1-8). So also Joshua at Shechem (Josh. 24. 1-28). What Samuel said to the people then assembled at Gilgal is recorded in chap. 12.

The king whom they were determined to have had been set over them, and Samuel met with them and their king before Jehovah in Gilgal. Samuel had his own sons there, like the rest of the males of Israel. Now on this great public occasion he asked the people to testify what his

life had been : for it had been spent in the sight of all Israel and in their service from his youth up. The quick and hearty response of the whole assembly testified before Jehovah how blameless his life had been. Resting on the sure ground of their acknowledgment, he pled with them in regard to all the righteous acts of Jehovah, before whom he and they stood, and he reminded them of all that Jehovah had done from the great starting point in their history, when He heard their cry, and brought them out of Egypt by Moses and Aaron, whom He had appointed ; and of all that He had continued to do, raising up a succession of judges to save them as often as they had brought mischief on themselves by forsaking Him. Samuel himself, who was speaking, was the latest example of this divine goodness and compassion. Yet now, because the king of the children of Ammon had come against them,\* they insisted on having an earthly king, though already their King was Jehovah. All this had been argued with them before by Samuel at full length, and they had made their choice. It only remained to be seen whether they and their king would fear and honour and serve Jehovah. So he commanded them to stand still (*v.* 16), as at *v.* 7 he had commanded them to do, and see the indication of their having done evil, for Jehovah should send thunder and rain in time of wheat harvest. When the thunder and rain came, "all the people greatly feared Jehovah and Samuel," confessed their sin in asking for a king, and besought Samuel, saying, "Pray for thy servants unto Jehovah thy God that we die not"; and at once he showed himself the true prophet anew, charging them with their guilt, yet proclaiming the mercy of

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\* It is possible, though scarcely probable, that Samuel had seen the judge whom he named, Jephthah, by whom those Ammonites had been slaughtered and subdued when they made an earlier and more formidable attempt.

Jehovah for His own great name's sake ; and he urged them not to turn aside from following Jehovah, while on his own part he promised to pray for them unceasingly, since he would count it a sin if he did otherwise ; also he would continue to instruct them in the good and right way. This closing scene reminds us of the opening scene in his administration ; there is the same high moral and spiritual tone as in chap. 7. 2-8. To those who refuse to consider this, Samuel's history must seem a mystery or a myth.

#### § 4. The connexion of Saul's appointment with Samuel's three sacred places.

A revolution has an element of suddenness in it, perhaps always of violent uprooting of some things that are old and of substituting what is new. Yet any justifiable and beneficial revolution must have a historical character, not breaking with the past, not having absolutely no roots in it. Rather it accelerates the processes which are too slow in their normal condition for the necessities of the emergency ; and yet when the timely and well-restrained violence has done its work, men wonder to see how the old principles are at work as much as ever ; nay, the very forms of procedure to which they have been accustomed are not changed so greatly as they had apprehended they were to be. Those three places which were connected with the three appointments of Saul to the kingdom were the very three places to which Samuel had made his annual circuits as he went to judge the people. He returned, indeed, from those circuits to his own house at Ramah, and there he judged Israel, and he built there an altar to Jehovah. Connected with this, let it be observed that it was in his own city and in his own house that he had his first meeting with Saul, and

there he administered to him the only anointing which Scripture mentions in so many words.\*

In an earlier part of this Essay, Samuel's choice of those three cities has been explained as arising out of the ruin of the worship of Jehovah at Shiloh, and the propriety of then falling back on those three ancient holy places, since Samuel and the people of Israel had no warrant for choosing a new place at which the ark might have rest from its wanderings. Moreover, one does not know whether any population was still left at Shiloh, who might have made an effort to bring the ark back to its old resting place; certainly no mention is ever afterwards made of it as an inhabited city. The solitary apparent exception is the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite; but that sad prophet may have deliberately chosen to dwell in a place of ruins, regarding it as appropriate to the melancholy duties which had been assigned to him (1 Kings 11. 29; 14. 2, 4). The only other passages of Scripture<sup>21</sup> in which reference is made to Shiloh (Psalm 78. 60, 67, 68; Jer. 7. 12, 26; 26. 6, 9) leave the question of its being still inhabited undecided. Anyhow, they make it clear that Jehovah had rejected Shiloh, and that it was no longer the place in which He chose to place His name. So Jeremiah warned his contemporaries that it was to be with Jerusalem. And so, in the fulness of the time, our Lord said to those who were about to reject Him, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."

In the constitutional history of our country it is from time to time recorded that an office ordinarily held under the Crown by an individual has been put into commission,

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\* If we overlooked this connexion with Samuel, and the historical reason for choosing those three places, we might be content to say that Samuel chose three cities in which to hold public worship and to execute the justice of Jehovah in the supreme court for Israel (for these two things went naturally together, if they were not inseparable; see Ps. 99), as the Philistines had carried the captive ark successively to three cities, until they were compelled to send it back to Israel.

so as to be held jointly by several. In this history of Israel, the like might be said of the city which was to be the chosen dwelling place of Jehovah's name. Beth-el and Gilgal and Mizpah were the three cities to which this honour was assigned by Samuel; the probable reasons for this selection have been already discussed.

It is remarkable that Samuel connected all these three cities and his own city, Ramah, with the successive appointments of Saul to the kingdom, as Samuel transferred to him the civil rule in Israel which had been in his own hands.

(1) Beth-el might be the most important of these cities considering what had been its religious history in connexion with Jacob and its prominence in the great civil war with Benjamin (Judg. 20. 18, etc.; 21. 2); and it seems to have been very near the place from which Saul was first sent forth by Samuel (chap. 10. 3). It might, indeed, itself be "the hill of God, where is the garrison of the Philistines" (*vv.* 5, 10), though this might also be Gibeah of Saul (*v.* 26), as it is in the R.V. margin (see afterwards how Saul posted his troops in this neighbourhood, chap. 13. 2).

(2) Ramah was the place where the elders of Israel gathered themselves to confer with Samuel about the kingdom. And there is every reason to understand it to be that unnamed city in chap. 9 at which Saul and Samuel first met. For Ramah was the city where Samuel had his home, or, as the chapter calls it, "the city where the man of God dwelt," to which he had been expected to return that very day to bless a sacrifice, with a feast following upon it, to which about thirty persons were invited; and Saul and his servant were told by young maidens going out to draw water that he had come, and they must make haste if they wished to find him (*vv.* 5, 6, 10-14, 18, 25, 26). It is not necessary to discuss whether this was the same as Ramathaim-

zophim, where his father lived. At all events, it was to Ramah that Samuel retired after his final separation from Saul (chap. 15. 34), and again after he had anointed David (chap. 16. 13). And in the account of Samuel's burial it is said to have taken place in his house at Ramah, even in his own city (chaps. 25. 1 ; 28. 3).\*

(3) Gilgal was the place where the Israelites held their first Passover in their own land. And it was to Gilgal that Samuel commanded Saul to go down before him and wait (chap. 10. 8), to which place, however, Saul did not go till Samuel led him and the people, in order that he might receive his appointment for the third time (chap. 11. 14, 15). It was to Gilgal that Saul returned on the two pathetic occasions on which his transgressions in his kingly administration drew down the rebuke of Samuel (chaps. 13. 4, 7, 8, 12, 15 ; 15. 12).†

(4) Mizpah is less mentioned in Samuel's history than any of these three ; only in the first days of his judging, as recorded in chap. 7, and when Saul was appointed the second time (chap. 10. 17), on an occasion at which Samuel might have expected to be released from his labours for the state.

It is also worthy of notice that these places sank very much out of view when those temporary arrangements of Samuel had served their purpose, and came to an end. An isolated notice appears now and then in history, but that is all. Ramah

\* The Hebrew in chap. 28. 3 is somewhat unusual ; Dr. Driver thinks it is probably an error, but translates it, "in Ramah, and *that* in his city." It may be so to give emphasis to the fact of his funeral being public. For thus Samuel would be marked out as resembling several of the later judges, in the honour rendered to him at his death ; see Judg. 10. 1, 2, 5 ; 12. 7, 10, 13, 15 ; 16. 31. Though Samuel had practically retired from office, the people honoured him as judge to the end.

† There was another Gilgal, or more probably two of them, mentioned in the histories of the prophets Elijah and Elisha ; they were situated on the mountain ridge running north and south through the tribe of Ephraim. The Gilgal in the history of Samuel and Saul is identified with the Gilgal of Joshua, which lay in the low Jordan valley, near Jericho, by the repeated use of the verb "go down" to it (chaps. 10. 8 ; 13. 12 ; 15. 12), and also "getting up" from it to Gibeah of Benjamin (chap. 13. 15).



is mentioned, owing to struggles on the frontier between the kings Baasha and Asa; and Mizpah is named in these struggles along with Ramah. At the time of the Captivity it is again named as the seat of government, chosen by Gedaliah, whom the Chaldeans set over the land; and Nehemiah, after the return from exile, names it once. There is an ingenious conjecture that it is the same place as Nob. For Nob is named only as the place where the ark and priests were in the latter days of Saul, who massacred the priests there, and in Isai. 10. 32, and once in Nehemiah.\*

The religious prominence given to these places in the change of worship introduced by Jeroboam and his successors, probably also in the marvellous efforts put forth by Elijah and Elisha to stem the tide of corruption in the kingdom of the Ten Tribes, bears indirect testimony to the importance which had been assigned to them in Samuel's transitional arrangements for divine worship. This importance is also sufficient to account for Samuel's bringing these cities into connexion with the successive acknowledgments of Saul as king of Israel. And this procedure of his is particularly natural, since the first and most formal account of Samuel's connexion with these places speaks of them as the places where he arranged to judge Israel in his circuits. According to Deut. 17. 8-13, also 19. 17, the place which Jehovah chose, namely to place His name there, was that in which supreme or final judgment was to be administered by the priests, the Levites, and the priest that should

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\* The spelling Mizpah is practically uniform in the R.V., thus conforming to the Hebrew text. For in the Hebrew it is rare to meet with Mizpah, and in the Books of Samuel it is certain only in 1 Sam. 22. 3, of a place in Moab. Beth-el appears in the history of Elijah and Elisha; otherwise its name would scarcely occur in the general history were it not for the melancholy notoriety attached to it as the more important of Jeroboam's two seats of calf worship. This evil reputation of Beth-el has led to its being repeatedly mentioned by the prophets Hosea and Amos in their denunciations of the unlawful worship there, along with Mizpah once and Gilgal repeatedly. Elsewhere, Gilgal is scarcely ever mentioned, only in 2 Sam. 19. 15, 40 (in the Hebrew 16, 41), and in the history of Elisha (2 Kings 2. 1; 4. 38).

stand to minister there, and the judge that should be in those days. The priests and the judge were to act together in this administration of justice. If we make due allowance for the two peculiarities in Samuel's case, the law in Deuteronomy represents exactly what he did. The first peculiarity is that he set up those three temporary seats of judgment and worship because at the time the only place which Jehovah had chosen had been rejected by Him. The second peculiarity is that nothing is recorded of the relations arranged by Samuel as between the services of the Levitical priests in their depressed and dishonoured condition at that time, and his own personal services in circumstances in which, like Moses, he combined in his own person the offices of prophet, priest, and ruler.

It is but a conjecture, yet it would be difficult to adduce any consideration militating against it, that Samuel distributed the honour as equally as he could among those three places, by appointing one of the three annual feasts or trysts to be held annually in its season at each of them. For it was at these trysts, when every male in Israel was bound to appear before Jehovah, that the simplest and most effective measures could be taken for executing judgment among the whole Twelve Tribes. Two out of these three trysts lasted seven days. Now seven days are mentioned twice in connexion with Samuel and Saul at Gilgal (chaps. 10. 8 ; 13. 8, 11) ; and in these two last texts the Hebrew expressly uses the word for *tryst*, as also at chap. 9. 24, on occasion of Saul being entertained by Samuel at the sacrificial feast. It would be difficult to give a preference as between the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles (that is to say, the Tryst of Booths) as the one connected with Gilgal. Psalm 81 has language which is applicable to both of these trysts, and may have been intended for use at both ; if so, showing how closely they were connected in the thoughts of godly Israelites.

## CHAPTER IX.

THE COMPLETENESS OF THIS QUIET REVOLUTION BY SAMUEL.

## § 1. Subsequent Relations of Samuel with Saul.

**I**T may be a very effective way of coming to comprehend the position into which Saul had been brought by Samuel, to begin from the point of view afforded by the summary of the situation given in chap. 14. 47-52, just before the account of Saul's rejection. The kingdom was a lawful form of government for the people of Jehovah; nay, it was included in the original plan of their constitution as this was announced by Moses to the people, otherwise Samuel would have refused to take any part in introducing it, far less would he have laboured for this as he did. But he had struggled against the evil which was in the hearts of the people, which prevented the realisation of the blessing which he foresaw that they might either win or throw away. Samuel, however, could not be expected to know beforehand what sort of a man Saul was and would become. Yet, while he hoped the best, his warnings in chap. 12 show how he had the true jealousy of a real prophet for the honour of Jehovah, and the needed faithfulness and tenderness of heart towards the people to whom he ministered. His early experience of Saul's negligence or self-will, when he did not go down to Gilgal before Samuel and wait for him there, must have led the prophet from the first to apprehend the worst possible consequences. Yet the sacred historian who wrote those verses (whether Samuel or a follower of his) took a generous, kindly interest in Saul's kingdom and in his personal affairs.

In the opening words there is perhaps a hint of the danger which Samuel had foreseen and deprecated ; " Now when Saul had taken the kingdom over Israel." The noun translated " kingdom," *m'lūchah*, is that which has already been noted as expressive of the royal estate in all its majesty, with all its prerogatives and with all its display. It became Samuel's duty in the end to tell Saul that in his eagerness for the worldly show he had provoked Jehovah to take away from him the show and the substance too (using a different noun, *maml'chūth*) ; " Jehovah hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine that is better than thou " (chap. 15. 28). It was of this (the same word as in chap. 14. 47) that Saul had said, at the commencement of his wicked jealousy of David, " They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands ; and what can he have more but the kingdom " (chap. 18. 8). And so when Shimei cursed David (2 Sam. 16. 8) he said, " Jehovah hath delivered the kingdom into the hands of Absalom thy son." It is still this word in the accounts of Solomon and Adonijah (1 Kings 1. 46 ; 2. 15, 22), and of Solomon or Rehoboam and Jeroboam (1 Kings 11. 35 ; 12. 21). And this is the word which Jezebel used as she reproached Ahab for not venturing to seize Naboth's vineyard, " Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel ? " (1 Kings 21. 7).<sup>\*</sup> Besides a certain shade of meaning in the noun used for *kingdom*, there is an emphasis, not favourable, in the verb, " He took the kingdom."<sup>o</sup> It is a verb never so used again. It is employed almost always of taking a city by storm ; of evil doers being taken by the sacred lot, of Jehu catching King Ahaziah, of a lion taking his prey, etc. It is difficult to avoid the

<sup>\*</sup> It is a different word, *mamlachah*, not giving prominence to the idea of royal majesty, in 1 Sam. 24. 20 (in Hebrew, 21) ; 1 Kings 2. 46 ; 11. 11, 13, 31, 34. Still another word, *mal'chūth*, is used in 1 Sam. 20. 31 ; 1 Kings 2. 12.

impression that Saul aimed at a kingdom with worldly glory and power, and that he would not hesitate to use any means, however violent, which might be necessary as he tried to secure it.

This was a flaw running through Saul's best doings, and in the end bringing ruin upon himself and all who clung to him. Yet however defective or objectionable his administration might be in the sight of God, as Scripture here intimates, it goes on to describe how, from a human point of view, there was very much to make his reign glorious for Israel, and to call forth the language which David used in his dirge over Saul and Jonathan. In the latter years of Samuel as judge, the people had been desirous of having a king to fight for them against the Philistines. Saul was given to them to gratify their wish ; and in the list of enemies written down in *v.* 47, the climax is reached when the Philistines are named. But first of all, on the east, there come Moab and the children of Ammon, who together are known as the children of Lot, inveterate enemies to the people of God : now it was the deliverance of Jabesh-gilead from Nahash the Ammonite that was Saul's first exploit, which secured for him the favour of the people and their hearty acknowledgment of him as king. Next is named Edom, on the south, an enemy, if possible, more envenomed. Thus the exaltation of Israel to the rank of a kingdom, which might rival the surrounding kingdoms of the world, or swallow them up, as had been expressed long ago, after the crossing of the Red Sea, in the Song of Moses, and also in the prophecies of Balaam, immediately bore fruit in the field of politics. It roused those nations to jealousy, hatred, opposition, and combination. Seeds of evil, whose crops of mischief were only at distant intervals apparent in the age of the Judges, were now industriously cultivated with skill and perseverance by confederate powers. Saul felt it at once, and throughout his

whole reign. It reappeared in the reign of David, who was soon discovered to be a still more formidable neighbour than Saul had ever been. Next comes a more distant enemy, Zobah, which is again named among David's enemies. Though the precise position of Zobah is matter of debate, it was certainly farther off, entirely to the north of Canaan. And here is a proof of the influence which Israel, as a full-grown nation, was beginning to exert upon countries at a considerable distance. Of course there was reaction from those more distant nations upon the kingdom of Israel; and in times of degeneracy and apostacy from Jehovah, this led to the ruin of Israel by the great military monarchies of Asia.

In regard to all the nations of whom the list is given, including the Philistines (against whom the hand of Jehovah had been all the days in which Samuel acted as judge), it is written that "whithersoever he turned himself he vexed them," or, as in the R.V., "he put them to the worse." The Hebrew is "condemned them"; that is, put them in the wrong in Jehovah's controversy with them for His people, as the prophets speak. And as he continued to act valiantly, he went back to the quarrel of Jehovah with the Amalekites, dating from the time of the Exodus, and he smote them; though more remained to be done with these last, as he learned by sad experience. However, before his terrible sin and fall, he had had a glorious reign. And the sacred writer notices how he acted in all different directions, as the individual judges had done in this or that single direction, according to the needs of their own time. He "delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them." He also kept faithful to Samuel's peculiar policy in cultivating peace with the Amorites, so far as we know, except in the single instance of his slaughter of the Gibeonites.

This pleasant passage, with its generous appreciation of all that could be said of good to be found in Saul's administration,

ends with the account of his family life, which may be pronounced good, if estimated by the standard of the times; for instance, he was not a polygamist. He was brave, and no doubt he fought as often as he thought that he should do for his people and his throne; yet perhaps he saved them from many wars by the provision which he made in self-defence; "There was sore war against the Philistines all the days of Saul; and when Saul saw any mighty man, or any valiant man, he took him unto him." \*

The *first* of the three great offences which Saul committed after coming to the throne is recorded in chap. 13. He had set up a standing army. A successful attack upon the Philistines, delivered somewhere amongst the heights near Beth-el and Gibeah, had induced Saul to summon all Israel to a war with these enemies, and no reason appears for his descending from his strong position on those heights to the low level of the Jordan at Gilgal (v. 4) other than this, that Gilgal was one of the three places which Samuel had chosen for his circuits to judge assembled Israel, and that he assembled them there for the religious feasts or trysts as well. Saul had occasion to know this thoroughly, since he never could forget his early blunder, when he had not gone down to Gilgal to wait for Samuel, who would have met him there for his good, after having offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices of peace offerings. †

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\* Here "took" is the ordinary verb for gathering, not the same verb as at v. 47.

† Owing to the absence of the tense of consecution in chap. 13. 4-7 (at least in the first verb of each of these verses, as at the middle of v. 3), it is preferable to translate the verbs by the pluperfect; the tense of a consecutive narrative appears again at v. 8, indicating that those four verses may be considered a sort of parenthesis introduced to explain what the circumstances had been in which Saul found himself at Gilgal, while the people followed him trembling (v. 7). The name *Hebrews*, in v. 3, 7, 19; 14. 11, 21, may have been used as a racial designation, to indicate all those who had Hebrew blood in their veins; while the name *Israel* is restricted here to those who loyally followed Saul as their king, whereas the rest of the Hebrews timidly submitted to the Philistines or fled to the other side of the Jordan, so as to be out of the way of danger.

On this occasion Saul was quite aware that Samuel might be expected, and he hoped that, after the solemnities of the seven days of "Samuel's tryst" (in the English Bible "the set time that Samuel had appointed"), he would have opportunity for discussing the situation with Samuel; it may be also for asking a special blessing upon this great campaign. But Samuel did not come down, for some reason which is unknown,\* and the people were scattered from Saul, who then took the matter into his own hands. Did he form the plan of rivalling Samuel? If he became priest as well as king, this would the more conform to the wishes of the people when they cried to Samuel, "Make us a king to judge us like all the nations." Why should he be inferior to those heathen kings around him, whose equal or superior he was when he fought with them? So confident and so at ease did he feel, that when Samuel at last came, as soon as Saul had made an end of offering the burnt offering, while the peace offerings had also been brought and were standing ready for him to sacrifice, Saul went out to meet him and to salute him. In fact, the margin notes that the Hebrew is "to bless him"; it may be that Saul was about to bestow his priestly blessing upon Samuel. If he actually reached this height of impudent assumption, it is manifest evidence how far wrong his state of mind was. But even supposing that he stopped short of this daring assumption, it was bad enough to make himself a priest, and thus to place himself on a level with Samuel. This insolent infringement of the law of God would come out all the more clearly if some of the Levitical priests, by Samuel's appointment or in their own

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\* Perhaps at this crisis, in which he had reason to apprehend that Saul would not do well for the cause of God, he left the conduct of the worship of Jehovah at this tryst or feast in the hands of the high priest, who appears close in the company of Saul, as described in the following chapter. It has already been remarked that next to nothing is mentioned in regard to Samuel's relations with the priests the descendants of Eli.



inherent right to minister before Jehovah where His people assembled (compare what is said in the foot-note), had taken up their station at Gilgal, and had been offering the appointed sacrifices of the seven days of the feast or tryst.

He was quickly brought to another state of mind by Samuel's question, "What hast thou done?" And he blundered out an excuse for himself, to which came the rejoinder from Samuel, "Thou hast done foolishly." Then, leaving Saul's own conscience to do its work, Samuel charged him with not having kept the commandments of Jehovah, and in consequence with having lost his kingdom over Israel; for Jehovah had been ready to establish it for ever if he had proved himself a theocratic ruler. Samuel thus exercised the functions of a prophet, as he had already exercised them in his address to the people and to Saul which is recorded in chap. 12. In any case, Samuel's prophetic function was not one which Saul would be so likely to attempt to appropriate after his experience described in chap. 10. 10-12. We now read (*v.* 15), "And Samuel arose and gat him up from Gilgal unto Gibeah of Benjamin." His going to Saul's city may have been owing to circumstances at the moment; for instance, Samuel's own city of Ramah was undoubtedly very near Gibeah, and it may then have been in the possession of the Philistines. For one might connect this with what is written of the Philistine invasion at the beginning of this chapter, and again with chap. 14. 2, of the unsettled state of matters about that time, when the Philistine garrison was close at hand. "And Saul abode in the uttermost part of Gibeah, under the pomegranate tree which is in Migron." At all events, when Samuel went straight to Saul's city of Gibeah, it is proof that he was not afraid after administering this solemn rebuke.

For the study of Samuel and his work it is not necessary to examine in detail the history given in chap. 14. It shows that

in Saul's campaign against the Philistines he was attended by the priest Ahijah, the grandson of Eli the priest of Jehovah in Shiloh, who exercised his high-priestly functions, asking counsel and receiving answers for the king (compare Num. 27. 21, etc.). Whether Saul had the ark as well as the priest with him, as it is known to have been at times with Israel and the king in the camp (2 Sam. 11. 11; 15. 24-29; 1 Kings 2. 26), depends on the reading of *v.* 18, where modern scholars generally follow the Septuagint in substituting "the ephod" for "the ark of God." Further, it appears also that Saul claimed the right to bind the people by an oath or vow laid by him upon them; but that, on the other hand, the people claimed the right to ransom (as in R.V. margin of *v.* 45) Jonathan, who had in ignorance failed to conform his conduct to that vow.

Samuel comes still more to the front in the *second* of Saul's great transgressions, as this is related in chap. 15. Saul had received a particularly stringent and formal commission from Samuel\* to execute the ban or curse of devoting upon the Amalekites. Both in its peculiarly terrible substance and in its remarkably strict form of language, it is difficult to imagine a message more plainly meant to test Saul and to be decisive of his attitude towards the invisible King of Israel, and consequently decisive of the future relations between Jehovah and him. It was a tremendous duty, not without honour to him who approved himself to Jehovah in such circumstances, from which any one might shrink if only he felt that he lawfully could. For it resembled that similar duty which was laid upon Joshua and the children of Israel to put to the ban the doomed nations of Canaan. Saul acted with an intelligence and an

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\* The arrangement of the words in the original of *v.* 1 justifies the translation, "It is I whom Jehovah sent to anoint thee to be king over His people, over Israel; now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of Jehovah."

energy which showed how thoroughly he understood what he ought to do, in the light of the solemn command recorded in Exod. 17. 14-16 ; Deut. 25. 17-19, the latter passage occurring in the book which the law of the kingdom required him to write out for himself to be the guide of his conduct, and the former having been committed to writing by Moses in obedience to a special command, for remembrance by Israel till the ban should be executed. This coming destruction of Amalek was also proclaimed by Balaam (Num. 24. 20-22). In that prophecy Balaam also announced a sad future to a nation mixed up with Amalek—the Kenites. Saul, however, recognised them as having voluntarily come into kindly relations with Israel in the age of the Exodus, and therefore he took effective measures to relieve them from the imminent danger in which they were. And yet Saul dared to violate the special command of Jehovah, committing a sin essentially the same as that of Achan when he took to himself some of the devoted things at Jericho. And if Saul remembered how he himself had been detected and brought forward to the throne by the same process of the sacred lot as that which detected Achan and drew him forth for punishment, he might reflect how it had been said of Achan, “That man perished not alone in his iniquity” (Josh. 22. 20).

“Then came the word of Jehovah unto Samuel, saying, it repenteth Me that I have set up Saul to be king,” the immediate consequence of his great transgression. Obviously this message was understood by Samuel to lay upon him the duty of revealing to Saul what had been revealed to himself, according to the lesson which he had learned at the commencement of his prophetic work, when the judgments on Eli’s house had been revealed to him, with the obligation to publish them. The A.V. says that this divine communication grieved Samuel, as no doubt it did ; yet it is the uniform meaning of

the verb elsewhere that is retained here in the R.V., "And Samuel was *wroth*." With this may be compared the R.V. margin at John 11. 33, 38, that our Lord Jesus was *moved with indignation* beside the grave of Lazarus. Samuel was certainly grieved; it is said afterwards that he mourned for Saul; this, however, was not all. When it is said that "he cried unto Jehovah all night," he might well have been moved with indignation that his sustained, sagacious, self-denying efforts to establish a genuine theocratic kingdom in Israel should have been ruined by this daring act of disobedience. Whatever might be the conflict of feelings in his own mind, the faithful prophet rose early to meet Saul in the morning. And he found the case more provokingly bad than he had yet known it to be. He had made the effort to meet Saul as early as possible, perhaps also as privately as possible; but he learned that Saul had been on the move still earlier, had come to the town of Carmel, and had there set up a memorial of his achievements; for some such vain-glorious monument must be intended by what the original calls "a hand," and the A.V. "a place." Moreover, after he had "gone about," it may be in a sort of triumphal procession, he had gone down to that sacred spot, Gilgal, undeterred by the recollection of his presumptuous disobedience there, and by the solemn warning from Samuel that this act had destroyed the stability of his kingdom. "He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be broken, and that without remedy" (Prov. 29. 1). If the history of any man throws light on this proverb, surely Saul is that man. He afterwards told Samuel that he had gone down to Gilgal for the very purpose that there he might "sacrifice unto Jehovah thy God" (vv. 15, 21). At the moment in which they met, Saul was perfectly at his ease and self-satisfied. He said, "Blessed be thou of Jehovah; I have performed the commandment of Jehovah." Samuel at once convicted him

of disobedience, by the sounds which he heard from the Amalekite sheep and oxen which had been spared. Saul's explanation, that he had spared for sacrifice what Jehovah had pronounced accursed and doomed to destruction (technically called *devoted*, that is, put to the ban), had no other effect than this of compelling Samuel, immediately and without holding back one word, to communicate to him the revelation made the preceding night. Saul indeed attempted to excuse himself, as he hinted that, if there was any blame, it lay with the people, a suggestion which he repeated with greater plainness at the same time that in the end he made the confession, "I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of Jehovah, and thy words; because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice." This unworthy attempt to shift the guilt from himself is one of the commonest devices of sinners, as they flounder on from one guilty action to another; and in Saul's case it marked how deeply he had fallen from being a man with generous high-minded impulses which had characterised him in better days. His false-hearted confession came too late, except that it brought out the noble teaching of Samuel, such as he must often have given to all Israel assembled for worship under the vile priests, the sons of Eli, and throughout his own ministry of twenty years after the Philistines had taken the ark captive. He had ever laboured to revive living godliness among the professing people of Jehovah.

Every true servant of God needs to teach men the high, pure morality of the divine law, as well as to train them so as to convince them of sin and shut them up to the righteousness of God revealed to faith, whether in the noonday light of the New Testament or in the glimmer of the Old Testament. Sacrifice has its own place in the worship of the repenting sinner; and Samuel did give its due to sacrificial worship. But his aim was to form the moral character, and in this, he assigned the

first place to hearkening and obeying the voice of Jehovah. And with awful solemnity he closed his lesson in these words, "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft," or divination, in the practice of which Saul's transgressions were to reach their fatal climax; "and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry."\* Let us not overlook the fact that Samuel refused to give any hint that Saul's sin would be forgiven, and that he pointedly refused to turn and worship with him.

Three incidents with which this narrative concludes help to bring out the character and work of Samuel.

*First.*—Having delivered his message, he turned about (the expression employed in *v.* 12 to describe Saul's movement) to go away (*v.* 27). But Saul caught hold of the skirt of the prophet's mantle or robe; as he did so it rent. Samuel saw in this a new announcement which he must make to Saul: "Jehovah hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine that is better than thou. And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent; for He is not a man that He should repent."†

*Secondly.*—Saul replied (*v.* 30), "I have sinned; yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people and before Israel, and turn again with me that I may worship Jehovah thy

\* It is unnecessary to go into the merits of the two renderings, this in the A.V. and that in the R.V., "idolatry and teraphim." The revised translation of the second noun is certainly the more precise; the honour paid to *teraphim* was a modified or softened idolatry that crept into domestic worship, from which Saul's daughter, David's wife, Michal, was perhaps not free (see chap. 19. 13, 16). But the habitual translation of the first noun is "iniquity," as in Num. 23. 21, both in A.V. and R.V., in a prophecy of Balaam, which Samuel seems to have had in his mind, a passage to which Dr. Driver and other commentators here refer. If the Hebrew noun does really mean "an idol" in Isai. 66. 3, as is usually supposed, it may be a solitary instance, a secondary application of "vanity," the other ordinary translation of the Hebrew word, since vanity is often mentioned as the characteristic of idols and idolatry.

† There is considerable resemblance, though with considerable differences too, in the rending of the garment, when the prophet Ahijah foretold to Jeroboam that he should have ten of the twelve tribes which composed Solomon's kingdom (1 Kings 11. 29-39).

God." This request opened up other questions to Samuel's mind. There was the amount of consideration to be shown to Saul in his official position while he continued to be king, as David was careful once and again to spare Saul's life—which might plausibly, or perhaps justly, have been pronounced to be forfeited—"because he is the anointed of Jehovah." There might be also the question of leaving the door of repentance open to Saul as a man, though it was shut as concerned his royal position. "So Samuel turned again after Saul; and Saul worshipped Jehovah."

*Thirdly.*—Samuel executed the commandment which he had received commission to give to Saul, and which had been daringly disregarded. Apparently the prophet turned from the king to the people, or their officers, for it was to them that he spoke when he said (*v.* 32), "Bring ye hither to me Agag, the king of the Amalekites." There is uncertainty as to the meaning of the adverb, which describes the manner of Agag's coming, and in consequence there is some difference of opinion as to the import of Agag's speech to Samuel. But there can be no difference about Samuel's reply. Agag had been as cruel and bloodstained as any of his people, probably he had been their leader in all wickedness, and retribution should come on him and his family. Samuel betrayed no passion; he simply acted as he felt bound to act by the commandment involved in that ancient curse which Jehovah had pronounced, and which He now brought home to His servant, prophet, and judge of Israel to carry out. The awful duty had been laid on Saul and his soldiers, who had disregarded it. It was as if a viceroy had defied his sovereign's express instructions, and had pardoned one whom he had been expressly forbidden to spare. Therefore on Saul's predecessor in office devolved the ungracious duty of cancelling that pardon which Agag had received, or expected to receive, and of carrying out the dread sentence

of the invisible King of Israel. Recognising the position of himself and Saul and Agag, and the sacred circumstances of the meeting in Gilgal to which Saul had brought the people to worship, "Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before Jehovah." To each of the three men it was an act of the last importance, and Samuel and Saul seem to have parted finally in silence.

The last two verses of the chapter are singularly pathetic. Samuel went to Ramah, where we know that his house had been, at all events from the time that his public administration began, and Saul went up to his house to Gibeah of Saul. Perhaps the pluperfect tense is the more precise translation. "Saul had gone up," as if he were the first to leave the spot on which he had stood, while Samuel virtually deposed him in the sight of all the people assembled at the place of public worship, where they had inaugurated his reign (chap. 11. 15). Whatever doubts exist as to the topography, Ramah and Gibeah were unquestionably very near, and the prophet and the king might easily have met any day; the only difficulty would be in avoiding a meeting, and perhaps they did accidentally come across one another's paths, but there was no intercourse. But Samuel came no more to see Saul to the day of his death, though this does not deny that Saul once, in a frantic state of mind, thrust himself into the presence of Samuel (chap. 19. 24). There is, however, an emphatic statement that Samuel mourned for Saul; the form of the verb favouring the idea that this mourning was a public act or a continued habit, that Samuel was recognised by all who saw him as a mourner for Saul.

There is little or nothing added to our knowledge of the mutual relations of Samuel and Saul, except in so far as we take in the account of Saul's interview with the witch of Endor in chap. 28. In no part of the Word of God is there any intention to minister to mere curiosity, and it is therefore not surprising that three views have been taken of the transaction,



and that it is not easy to say that any one of them is inconsistent with the narrative given in Scripture. Both those who think that Satan was permitted to deceive the woman as well as Saul, and those who think that her surprise was only feigned and that the whole was a piece of acting on her part to deceive the king, altogether remove Samuel from consideration: on either view he has no concern in the transaction. It is only those who think that, for a special reason and in exceptional circumstances, Jehovah permitted the real Samuel to appear, who can make any use of the history in studying Samuel's character and mission. Yet, even so, Samuel does no more than press home on Saul's conscience his great sin in not executing on Amalek the fierceness of Jehovah's wrath. It is thus that he evinces the impossibility of giving Saul any assistance in what was now his desperate condition, as he felt how all the judgments denounced in the final interview at Gilgal were actually closing round him. The narrative does indeed show how Saul's character had deteriorated. There is a cry of agony and terror, but there is no confession of sin, no renewal of the request to Samuel to pray with him or for him. Jehovah no longer answered him by prophets nor by dreams.\*

This was the *third* and last great transgression of Saul, the commission of which was immediately followed by the loss of his kingdom, already declared to be forfeited, and at the same time by the loss of his life (1 Chron. 10. 13, 14).

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\* So he says to Samuel (v. 15), omitting any mention of the special means of communication with Jehovah which had been provided for the civil head of Israel, namely the Urim of the high priest. The Urim had indeed been mentioned, along with the other two means, not by Saul, but by the historian, at v. 6. How he had acted with reference to the Urim may be seen in chap. 14. 3, 18, 19, 36-46. Probably he was ashamed to mention the Urim at all now, after his massacre of the priests, recorded in chap. 22. In this extremity of despair, he stooped so low that he consulted a woman with a familiar spirit, though in his better days he had cut off all who practised such forbidden arts. He was compelled to call in his servants to assist him in humiliating himself, and at the same time to disguise himself, like the wife of king Jeroboam when going to the prophet Ahijah, in difficulties which they had brought on themselves.

## 2. Samuel's Relations with David.

Samuel's connexion with Saul was now at end, but not his interest in the kingdom of Jehovah in Israel, nor his labours on its behalf. He showed himself unceasingly a mourner for Saul (chap. 15. 35 ; 16. 1) ; yet mourners may need to bestir themselves and to make efforts to carry on the ordinary business of their lives. Thus he was sent by Jehovah to Bethlehem, to Jesse, one of whose sons had been provided by Jehovah to fill the place which Saul had virtually left vacant. The action of Samuel on this occasion is in essentials much as it was on the occasion of his first meeting Saul ; there is the account of the sacrifice, of the anointing, and of the bodily qualities of David, different from those of Saul, yet also striking and attractive. However, there was one essential difference, namely, in the spiritual qualities. Looking at the spiritual side, Saul's history had been a dismal failure. Therefore that message had come to him through Samuel : " Jehovah hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine that is better than thou " (chap. 15. 28). Samuel himself had been nearly led astray by the commanding stature of Jesse's eldest son ; perhaps such stature as he had seen in Saul. " But Jehovah said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance nor on the height of his stature, because Jehovah hath rejected him ; for Jehovah seeth not as man seeth : for man looketh on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looketh on the heart." And after the anointing, " the Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon David from that day forward " (chap. 16. 7, 13). Yet, so far as we know, this was a solitary and a momentary interference by Samuel with political affairs. After anointing David, " Samuel rose up and went to Ramah," just what he is said to have done after his final message to Saul, as he parted from him for ever. He

left the issues in the hands of the God of Israel. It was Jehovah, their invisible King, who had marked Saul out to the people by the brilliant exploit which relieved Jabesh-gilead at the time when Nahash the Ammonite attacked it; and who had already marked out David as the coming saviour of Israel by his victory over Goliath in single combat, a feat reminding men of the deeds of some of the old judges, and impelling Saul himself to say that nothing remained for David to receive from the people except the kingdom.

It is true that this solitary act of Samuel in anointing David only once, is a contrast to his thrice setting Saul apart for the kingdom. That threefold process, however, was while the change which may be styled a revolution was in progress; the three successive acts removed various obstacles and brought out various features of the great movement. Nothing more of this nature ought to have been needed; no more of it would have been needed had not Saul failed so lamentably as to be publicly rejected by Jehovah, who had chosen him. In David's case there was simply a change of the person, from an unworthy man to the man after God's own heart. And since Saul declined to acknowledge the act of Jehovah which set him aside, he was permitted to drag out his life, and his God-forsaken administration, till he wore himself out, and died a suicide's death on the battle-field of Gilboa. Once and again David deliberately refused to slay the anointed of Jehovah. For he said, "As Jehovah liveth, Jehovah shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall go down into battle and perish"\* (chap. 26. 10). Samuel knew from the first Saul's jealous and suspicious disposition, which would not

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\* Yet, after the death of both Samuel and Saul, David was twice again anointed king: first, by his own kindred of the tribe of Judah; and next, after the death of Saul's son Ish-bosheth, by the elders of Israel, who made a covenant with him, doubtless remembering Samuel's lessons on the subject of the divine constitution of the kingdom (2 Sam. 2. 4; 5. 3; see also 3. 17, 18).

shrink from taking the extremest measures. When Samuel received the commandment to go to Beth-lehem and anoint David, he asked, "How can I go? If Saul hear it he will kill me." To protect himself he was bidden to fall back upon his priestly rights: "Take a heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to Jehovah." There is no need to notice particularly the murderous attempts which Saul made upon the life of David, as his jealousy rose to the pitch of madness that led him to aim a javelin at his own heroic son Jonathan, whom he accused of conspiring along with David.

Samuel therefore seems to have kept aloof from all entanglements in politics. He may have acted on some such principle as that which led Elisha to send one of the sons of the prophets to bestow, for the last time, the anointing of Jehovah upon a king of the Ten Tribes. He bade him anoint Jehu; "then open the door, and flee, and tarry not" (2 Kings 9. 1, 3, 10).

This mention of the sons of the prophets, who also are repeatedly mentioned in the history of Elijah and Elisha, reminds the reader that it is in connexion with Samuel that he is first introduced to the company or band of the prophets (chap. 10. 5, 6, 10-12, and then again, chap. 19. 18-24). These two passages manifestly stand in some relation to one another. In both, the company of prophets are represented as actually prophesying, and on the former occasion doing this with musical instruments before them as they came down from the high place, which we may probably take to be Beth-el (compare, for this musical accompaniment, Isai. 30. 29). On the latter occasion there is some regular training or guidance on the part of Samuel (chap. 19. 20).\* It is a common and natural

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\* Saul's messengers "saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as head over them," E.V.; or, "as appointed over them," A.V. Professor H. P. Smith says, "The two words together are impossible." I see nothing to justify this statement. Samuel's bodily attitude was that of standing; his position or occupation, quite suitably to this, was that of presiding over them.

supposition that at these two anxious periods, crises in the spiritual interests of Israel, first Samuel, and secondly Elijah and Elisha, gave themselves to the work of training men for the service of Jehovah, out of the whole number of whom perhaps He might be pleased to call some to be His prophets. If this explanation of the state of the case is correct, then Samuel, in his last days, as well as in his earliest, to which chap. 7. 2-6 refers, occupied himself especially with his prophetic office, particularly this form of its duties, the training of men who might assist him and succeed him, through whom he might hope for the renewal of the people, such renewal as he had aimed at accomplishing by his personal ministry when he began his labours. For in his youth and early prime he might connect this more closely with his personal efforts: but when old age and feebleness overtook him, he might come to think more of a spiritual seed, whom he was to raise up to be a blessing in Israel, under the new regime of the kingdom. That he was successful may be inferred from "prophets," in the plural, being mentioned (1 Sam. 28. 6, 15). And it would also be so far an encouragement to him to see not only Saul's messengers, who had been sent in three successive detachments, but also Saul himself as he followed them, coming under Samuel's influence, and joining in some of the religious exercises. For it reminded Saul, and others also, of his young days, when he first felt the influence of Samuel and of the company of prophets, and more or less attached himself to them in the service of God.\*

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\* In chap. 10. 11, an occurrence is recorded: "And it came to pass, when all that knew him beforetime saw that, behold, he prophesied with the prophets, then the people said one to another, What is this that is come unto the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?" When comments came to be made on this event, what had been said once passed into a standing saying: "Therefore it became a proverb, Is Saul also among the prophets?" In chap. 19. 24, the change of tense from narrative to that which is habitual, "Wherefore they say, Is Saul also among the prophets?" makes it plain that this was an instance of the use, as a proverb, of

Perhaps what is of chief importance in this narrative, however, is that Samuel was not permitted by the jealous tyrant to carry out his wish to live outside of politics and the suspicions engendered by them. David, who had become the anointed of Jehovah, whom Samuel had invested with this high but perilous honour, was now the object of malignant hatred and of incessant persecution, all the more because his persecutor had become a madman, at least sometimes and so far, who would not have spared his own beloved son, the heir apparent to his throne. David fled from danger to his life, such as pursued him into the privacy of his home, and from which he escaped for a night by the assistance of his wife, who was Saul's daughter. He betook himself to the place at Ramah, where Samuel and his prophets dwelt; and there he was at first in safety. It is impossible to say how short this period of safety was. The only historical statement is this: "Now David fled and escaped, and came to Samuel to Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done unto him. And he and Samuel went and dwelt in Naioth. And it was told Saul, saying, Behold, David is at Naioth in Ramah. And Saul sent messengers to take David." As soon as Saul, following his messengers, had come in person,\* it was plain that there was no safety there for David. He fled from Naioth, and he may never have seen Samuel again. Their personal relations having thus been violently brought to an end, it is unnecessary to go into the details of David's fruitless efforts to find a shelter elsewhere; first with Jonathan the king's son, and then with Ahimelech the high priest; still less, to study his life as an outlaw, sometimes

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what had been said long before. This renewal of the popularity of the proverb was due to Saul's apparent return to coming under the prophetic influence. Critics might have saved their labour in conjecturing that there were two different accounts, perhaps irreconcilable, of the expression as applied to Saul.

\* A case very different from that of Elijah and the three captains of fifties, sent by the king Ahaziah, he himself being a hopeless invalid.

in the land of Israel, sometimes among the Philistines. For none of these matters have any very perceptible bearing upon the study of Samuel's character and work. The death of Samuel, however, which brought "all Israel" together to lament him, and to bury him in his house at Ramah, is no doubt connected with what the historian mentions next, "And David arose and went down to the wilderness of Paran," etc. (chap. 25. 1, 2).

It is Samuel the prophet and priest who is seen placing David on the throne, as he sacrifices and teaches and anoints; yet, strictly speaking, David's kingly office was the outcome and continuation of Samuel's office as judge. We have seen how Saul, even in the first and most promising days of his administration as king, acknowledged Samuel's joint authority, as one may express it, in his proclamation summoning the people, through all the borders of Israel, to come to the rescue of Jabesh-gilead (chap. 11. 7). And after Saul's great outstanding sin, when he chose to refrain from executing the ban upon Amalek, Samuel said, "Bring ye hither to me Agag, the king of the Amalekites," and, in spite of any plea that might be devised, hewed Agag in pieces before Jehovah in Gilgal (chap. 15. 32, 33). Thus this great and faithful prophet, as he called David to the throne which Saul had forfeited, claimed to be transferring that which rightfully and virtually he held in his own hands. And when David was acknowledged as king by the whole Twelve Tribes, and when he made Jerusalem his capital, he felt that the touch of Samuel was still upon him. "And David perceived that Jehovah had established him king over Israel, and that He had exalted His kingdom for His people Israel's sake" (2 Sam. 5. 12). And, moreover, the terse description of his manner of ruling is quite in the spirit that became the theocratic king whom Samuel consented to set over the people, entirely different from "the king like unto the nations,"

whom their ignorant and corrupted taste, in spite of his warnings, had led them to desire and demand. "And David reigned over all Israel; and David executed judgment and justice unto all his people" (2 Sam. 8. 15; compare the description of the right king of Israel in David's own last words, 2 Sam. 23. 1-7). Not, certainly, that David was free from fault, either in his life as an individual or in his public administration; the history furnishes clear evidence to the contrary. But perhaps the height of his glory and the depth of his great fall are brought together in 2 Sam. 10 and 11, much as Saul's case is presented in 1 Sam. 14. 47-52 and chap. 15. The glories of the two successive reigns of David and Solomon no doubt had their imperfections, and sometimes foul blemishes, on account of which the breaking up of Solomon's empire was like the rapid disappearance of the masses of frozen snow over the face of the country under the influence of a sunny thaw. It disappeared at his death, and yet scarcely anything is said of the process, except the rending of the kingdom into two. Keeping all this that is disappointing in view, the fact remains that psalmists and prophets dwell on the reigns of David and Solomon with wonder and delight. These reigns furnished to the national intelligence and conscience the best mirror of the coming reign of Messiah. They also bear testimony to the greatness and thoroughness of the work of Samuel, perhaps especially as the prophet of Israel in the age of transition. A galaxy of seers and prophets distinguished David's court; of these Gad and Nathan are named repeatedly, and manifestly they occupied an important position in regulating the affairs of the state.

Yet, again, David's kingly office had an intimate connexion with Samuel as a priest; for Samuel's priestly dignity and authority were involved in his high office as representative of



Jehovah to Israel. His offering sacrifice, as he set David apart to be king, was a priestly act, and so was the anointing. All this was just as it had been when Saul was set apart. Again, in the narrative of Solomon's coronation by the command of David, to counteract a conspiracy, when father and son should sit together on the throne, we read how both prophet and priest took part. These, however, were two separate individuals, for there was no longer one man who combined the two offices in his own person. A deeply interested eye-witness describes it: "And Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet have anointed him king in Gihon, and they are come up from thence rejoicing, so that the city rang again" (1 Kings 1. 45).\*

In that happy condition of rest for Israel to which Samuel looked forward, as the issue of struggles in his own time of transition and revolution, two things much wanted were to come together. There was to be a fixed capital, in which Jehovah's anointed might sit securely on his throne; and there was also to be a fixed, unmoving temple of stone, replacing the worn-out tabernacle of Moses, which had been handed on to successive generations from the time that it had been constructed (see Acts 7. 44-47). A sure house for Jehovah was to be the accompaniment of a sure place, the metropolis for the people. In these two directions we observe the aspirations both of David and of his friend and adviser Nathan (2 Sam. 7.) It was this which induced David to gather all the chosen men of Israel—thirty thousand—and go with them to bring up the ark to Jerusalem from Baale of Judah, that is, Kirjath-jearim, where it had lain ever since its return from exile among the Philistines (see

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\* Indeed, when he began by saying, "Our lord king David hath made Solomon king" (v. 43), he brought together all the three agents in the official work of grace in Israel: prophet, priest, and king united to set Solomon upon the throne.

1 Sam. 7. 1, and 2 Sam. 6 and 7, with which compare the more minute description in 1 Chron. 15 and 16). In this way Jerusalem would become the holy city, the faithful city. It is true that David was not permitted to build the house of God which he had planned; yet this disappointment did not deprive him of all that he had hoped to have. That thoroughly temporary tabernacle, in which he placed the ark after bringing it to Zion, was to him "the house of Jehovah," as it is named when he went to worship after the death of his child (2 Sam. 12. 20); in fact, the tabernacle of Moses had received this name already in the earliest legislation (Exod. 23. 19; 34. 26).

It is plain that David's purpose was to centralise the worship of Israel before Jehovah, that is, to bring back the original unity contemplated in the Law of Moses. Samuel had seen how there was no longer a place which Jehovah had chosen in which to cause His name to dwell, and therefore Samuel's temporary arrangement was so far to centralise as to have three centres, besides his altar and his court of justice at his own house at Ramah. On the face of it, with his private house occupying a central position in the arrangement, this is seen to be a temporary or transitional scheme; in so far, therefore, it embraced enfeebling and confusing elements. But David's centralisation was a scheme logically complete, yet it was only his aim, which he was unable to carry out fully into practice. From the account in 1 Chron. 15 and 16, it is plain that the measure of success to which he attained was this, that he reduced Samuel's three or four places to two. The one of these was at Jerusalem, more precisely at Zion, where the king himself resided, and there he pitched a new tabernacle for the ark, before which his intimate friend, the devoted companion of his wanderings through all the persecutions by Saul, the

high priest Abiathar, ministered. If this is not asserted in so many words, at all events it must be inferred from what is said (1 Chron. 15. 11) of Zadok and Abiathar the priests being jointly at the head of the arrangements for worship. Now, according to chap. 16. 37-42, besides the service before the ark (which certainly was at Jerusalem), Zadok was left at Gibeon to minister before the tabernacle of Moses, from which the ark remained separate, as it had been ever since the day on which it had been taken from Shiloh to the battle with the Philistines. In addition to this, David was true to Samuel's interest in sacred songs and music; he had the sacred playing and singing kept up both at Zion and at Gibeon.\*

Complete unity was not attained until the building of the Temple by Solomon. The last step in advance was taken the more easily on account of the political events which led to the removal of Abiathar from the priesthood, and the final accomplishment of the curse pronounced by the unnamed prophet in Shiloh upon the house of Eli.

Very little reference is made to the priesthood of the house

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\* There is no well-grounded objection to the truthfulness and accuracy of the details furnished by the Chronicler. A favourite point of attack is his alleged exaggeration of numbers. Yet in 1 Chron. 15. 5-10, the numbers are at once moderate and carefully particularised; whereas in 2 Sam. 6. 1, a single large number is given, 30,000. The depreciation of his book, as a whole, in respect of these qualities, seems to me entirely without justification, even from a purely literary point of view. If I were a critic inclined to hesitate about accepting other statements in the book, I should still think the truth of this narrative confirmed, when I consider that the separation of the tabernacle from the ark, and the setting up of the public worship of Israel in two independent centres, was in entire opposition to the supposed hierarchical prejudices of the writer. And I also see confirmation of the narrative in the statements in Samuel and Kings. In 2 Sam. 6 we read of David taking the ark into the city of David, and there pitching a tabernacle for it; and there are subsequent references to its being at Jerusalem, and habitually remaining there in David's reign. Again, in 1 Kings 3. 2, 4, 5, 15, we read of the people, at the time of Solomon's accession to the throne, sacrificing in high places, because there was no house built for the name of Jehovah till those days; of Solomon going to Gibeon to sacrifice there, because that was "the great high place," and offering a thousand burnt offerings upon its altar;

of Aaron in those unsettled or revolutionary times of the administrations of Samuel and Saul; as in like manner very little reference is made to them in the loose arrangements of the age of the Judges, whose history is given in the book which receives its name from them. Perhaps the priesthood was already weak in weight of personal character; three men in succession, such as Aaron and Eleazar and Phinehas had been, may have been followed by others far inferior to them in capacity and in character. If this were so, the priestly family would become much weaker still, as the judgments on Eli's house went forward steadily till they were executed to the uttermost. In 1 Sam. 14. 3, we read of "Ahijah, the son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli the priest of Jehovah in Shiloh, wearing an ephod."\*

This verse seems to make Ahijah one of those who were gathered round Saul "in the uttermost part of Gibeah, under the pomegranate tree at Migron." (See *vv.* 1-3.) Then, as if the priest were continuing to be in camp with Saul and his soldiers, at *v.* 18 Saul says to him, "Bring hither the ark

of Jehovah appearing to Solomon at Gibeon by night, and giving him his choice of what he would, when he chose wisdom; and of Solomon then returning to Jerusalem, and standing before the ark of the covenant, and offering up burnt offerings and offering peace offerings, and making a feast to his servants, at the place where he proceeded to give proof of his wisdom as the supreme judge of the people of Jehovah.

\* There are at least two points open to discussion in this sentence. Is there not emphasis in the rapidity with which the high-priesthood passed from one individual to another, showing how Eli's house was being broken up according to the curse. The rate of rapidity partly depends on whether "Ahimelech, the son of Ahitub the priest," to whom David fled and who was killed in the massacre by Saul (see chaps. 21 and 22), is the brother and successor of Ahijah, whose name is written "Ahiah" in the A.V., or is another name for Ahijah himself. A second question is this: is "the priest of Jehovah in Shiloh," of whom we read here, Ahijah or Eli? Is he the first or the last in this genealogical list? So far as grammar is concerned either construction is satisfactory. But I think it is easier to apply it to Eli, for he was undoubtedly the priest of Jehovah in Shiloh; whereas there is no evidence elsewhere that any of Eli's descendants, or in fact any person whatever, acted as priest wearing an ephod in Shiloh, after that disastrous day on which Hophni and Phinehas fell in battle.

of God ; for the ark of God was there at that time with the children of Israel.”\*

At first Saul would have had the priest consult God on his behalf, but suddenly as the movement in the Philistine camp became more violent, he bade the priest withdraw his hand. This looks as if the king reckoned it a small matter to ask counsel of God, and again a small matter after having begun this inquiry, to stop short before he had received the answer. Was there in this any deeper feeling, or any greater respect for divine things, than in Pilate's asking our Lord, What is truth ? and not waiting for an answer ? It is true that, after winning the victory very much through Jonathan, Saul was rigid in enforcing the divine law against eating blood ; and he built an altar there. But evidence is wanting as to the connexion of these two acts, as to whether the altar was identical with the great stone which he had rolled to him, so as to pour out on it the blood of the animals. Moreover, the accompanying statement has been largely discussed, as it certainly is not easy to explain : “ the same was the first altar that he built unto Jehovah ” (*v.* 35). Upon this follows Saul's proposal to pursue the Philistines and annihilate them, the priest's advice to draw near to God, Saul's asking counsel of God and receiving no answer, etc. These details of the history do not suggest that the priestly office at that time carried much weight with it, at least in Saul's camp.

From the narrative in chap. 22 we learn how Ahimelech the priest at Nob was accused of treason by Saul, who was stirred up to this by Doeg's calumny that he had inquired of Jehovah for David ; how he and all his father's house, eighty-five in number, were massacred by the king's command, and

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\* It has been already observed that for our present purpose it matters little whether we retain this, which is the Hebrew reading, or whether, with the Septuagint, we substitute “ephod” for “ark.”

their city treated much as Saul had been commanded to treat the Amalekites. It can scarcely be doubted that this unjust and bloody act of king Saul brought the priests in Israel very low, the more so because the sin and shame of the house of Eli were notorious throughout all Israel, as well as the divine judgments denounced on them. Possibly an indication that respect for them was on the wane, is to be found in the historian's remark that "the counsel of Ahithophel which he counselled in those days was as if a man inquired at the oracle of God; so was the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom" (2 Sam. 16. 23). There are also some curious expressions, as if the priests came to be held in less estimation, in contrast with the rising estimation for the king. The wise woman of Tekoa says, "Let the word of my lord the king be comfortable; for as the angel of God so is my lord the king, to discern good and bad" (2 Sam. 14. 17); and much so Mephibosheth speaks in chap. 19. 27. On the other hand, the fact that Saul could find none of his Israelite servants to obey his murderous command, and that he had to take Doeg the Edomite to be his executioner, is evidence that there was something in Israel, though it were nothing more distinct than sentiment, which revered and protected the priestly house, as the recognised ministers of Jehovah. Not improbably Doeg was the more disposed to execute the king's vengeance upon them because in doing this he gratified his own personal feelings, since it is said that he was "detained before Jehovah" on that day when David was with Ahimelech in Nob. The expression is unique, and it may be a proof that ecclesiastical discipline was a reality which could not be neglected, since the high priest exercised some spiritual authority even over this powerful and regardless Edomite favourite at court.

Whether in these things there is any approximation of the

priestly and kingly offices, such as had been dimly foreshadowed in the language of Samuel's mother, and in that of the unnamed prophet who was sent to Eli, it is very difficult to say. This approximation may be traced in the language of Psalm 110, as at a much later time in the language of Zechariah (chaps. 3 and 6). It is extremely doubtful whether anything can be determined on the subject from the title of "priest" which is given in certain lists to sons of David, and to one or two others who held high office beside the king : see 2 Sam. 8. 18 ; 20. 26 ; 1 Kings 4. 5.

There are, however, a few very obscure matters relative to the position of the priesthood under the system introduced by Samuel and completed by David. For instance, how and why was the tabernacle of Moses, the empty tabernacle without the ark, moved from Shiloh ? It is not surprising that the tabernacle in its empty state, dishonoured by the loss of the ark, for the sake of sheltering which it had been erected by Moses, should have been removed from Shiloh after the great disaster ; but when and whither ? Very little indeed can be said of the relations subsisting between Samuel and those priests who were descended from Eli. It cannot be imagined that Hophni and Phinehas had any friendly relations with the holy young prophet, their feelings towards him might be not unlike what both the Old and the New Testaments tell of the feelings of the men of Sodom towards Lot. But of the personal character of their descendants and of their attitude towards Samuel, which might largely determine his attitude towards them, Scripture is silent. Nor does it reveal what interest he took in the tabernacle, nor how his memories of youthful days made him feel.

When we come to a later time, that in which David's efforts were made in the direction of restoring the unity of worship, one peculiarity is very striking ; namely, that instead

of a single high priest there were two,\* Zadok and Abiathar. These are mentioned again and again as acting conjointly, and also the son of each of them as assisting in their general work ; and Abiathar, who may well have been comparatively aged (whereas Zadok was young, 1 Chron. 12. 28) and worn out by a life of hardship and danger, is at times represented by his son Ahimelech.† According to the common translation, which there is no need to abandon, Zadok is himself pronounced by David to be a seer (2 Sam. 15. 27), in a text to which more particular attention must now be given ; and if so, Zadok is to be classed with Gad and Nathan, as belonging to that prophetic school through which Samuel, even after his death, continued to influence David. 2 Sam. 15. 24-29, 35, 36 narrates the conduct of David in respect of the ark at the time when he was fleeing from Absalom. Zadok, and all the Levites with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God, came after David. They set it down, and Abiathar went up, probably up the Mount of Olives, if we compare *v.* 30 (though others translate the verb "offered up," namely, burnt offerings), till all the people had done passing out of the city. But David recognised the habitation of Jehovah ‡ to be the city of Jerusalem, which he had just been forced to quit. He therefore bade Zadok carry the ark back ; then, if Jehovah should show him favour, he might yet see both the ark and Jehovah's homestead ; if not,

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\* There are students of the Old Testament who do not allow that there was a high priest, or a most holy place in the Temple before the Exile; and an appeal has been made to Ezekiel's temple, in which nothing is said of these. Though the subject has often been discussed, perhaps I may refer to four short papers which I wrote on those very peculiarities, and on the causes and the consequences of them, in the *Expository Times* (Clark, Edinburgh), from May to August, 1898.

† Whether Ahimelech, repeatedly mentioned in Chronicles and in 2 Sam. 8. 17. is merely another name for Jonathan (2 Sam. 15. 27, 36), we cannot say.

‡ This might better be translated His homestead, according to the usual application of the term, for instance, habitually to describe the home of both a man and his flocks and herds. It has no connexion, not even the most remote, with the noun by which the psalmist describes the sanctuary as His habitation ; nor with that somewhat rare noun so translated in 1 Sam. 2. 29, 32.



he submitted himself meekly to the severe discipline which he had brought upon himself. So Zadok and Abiathar, the latter no doubt having now come down again from where he had gone up, carried back the ark of God to Jerusalem, and they abode there. Also when David's friend Hushai had come to meet him, David urged him to return to Jerusalem to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel; adding that Hushai would have beside him there Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and their two sons, four confidential and willing helpers. These two sons of the two priests were actually sent forth on duty by their fathers, under instructions from Hushai (2 Sam. 17. 15-21). After the death of Absalom, David sent to Zadok and Abiathar the priests to act for his interests with the elders of Judah (2 Sam. 19. 11). In the earlier part of David's reign there is a list of the men in high offices around him (2 Sam. 8. 16-18); among these, "Zadok the son of Ahitub, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, were priests." In the corresponding list, belonging to the time after the suppression of Absalom's rebellion (2 Sam. 20. 23, 26), the notice is a little shorter, and it gives Abiathar's own name: "And Zadok and Abiathar were priests." Compare the account of the joint action of the two priests in 1 Chron. 24. 1-6, 31. This passage speaks of the twenty-four divisions of the priests; sixteen of them being assigned to Zadok's kindred, of the line of Aaron's son Eleazar, and eight of them to Ahimelech's kindred, of the line of Ithamar.

There is still another passage with the account of this joint action of the two priests, on an earlier occasion, when the ark was in process of being removed from Kirjath-jearim to Jerusalem. At the beginning (1 Chron. 15. 11) "David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests." At the close of the proceedings, Abiathar is not named as being entrusted with the ark, which was certainly left beside David at Jerusalem (*v.* 29; 16. 1). Yet

manifestly this was the natural arrangement, that David should retain beside him, in this high trust, Abiathar, who had been his companion through all the hardships and dangers during Saul's persecution of them both; the more so, since Saul had massacred all Abiathar's priestly kindred on a false charge of treason in giving help to David. If any one is so sceptical as to deny that Abiathar was left as priest in charge of the ark in the city of David, he will find it difficult to conjecture any other arrangement, or to imagine what came of Abiathar. Zadok had not been any such intimate friend of David; besides, he was stationed at the other centre of public worship, at Gibeon, where the empty tabernacle of Moses stood. See David's final arrangements, as recorded in 1 Chron. 16. 37-42.

The two high priests took opposite sides in the political troubles which emerged towards the end of David's reign. Adonijah's claim to the throne was supported by Abiathar, but Solomon's by Zadok (1 Kings 1. 7, 8, 19, 32-45). For acting thus, Abiathar was thrust out from the priesthood by Solomon, and Zadok remained sole high priest (1 Kings 2. 26, 27, 35). It might seem a strain of prerogative thus to displace Abiathar; but Solomon averred that it was his royal mercy which did not put him to death as a traitor. And he did not recognise any right in Abiathar's son to succeed his father. The whole of the details furnished by the history, on to this crisis, present Abiathar and Zadok as on an equal footing in the discharge of their priestly functions. But it was an accident in the peculiar circumstances of the times of David, coming after the still greater difficulties with which Samuel had had to contend, that in Israel there were two high priests acting thus together. And when Abiathar's treason set him aside, the dual high-priesthood came naturally and easily to an end. "Zadok the priest did the king put in the room of Abiathar" (v. 35); that is to say, Zadok received the post of taking charge of the ark. But no one was

put in Zadok's place at Gibeah ; so long as the two centres of public worship continued, he must be supposed to have had charge of the whole.\*

The question may be asked, how came Zadok to be high priest at all ? There is no direct answer to this in Scripture. One must either rest in a simple confession of ignorance, or he must have recourse to a certain amount of conjecture, as he puts together a few scattered intimations, and draws inferences from these. He may start with the conviction that Saul could never be on friendly terms with a priest of the house of Eli, after he had massacred eighty-five of these priests and their families. Probably any one of Eli's house who survived, like Abiathar, would feel that there was no safety for him but in doing as Abiathar did, throwing off his allegiance to Saul, and proclaiming himself an adherent of the cause of David. If this were so, how could Saul maintain his position as king of Israel, and carry on his administration without a high priest and a house of God ? If he denounced the house of Eli as traitors, must he not have refused to acknowledge any one of them as priests over the house of God, in the way that afterwards Solomon thrust Abiathar from the priesthood ? Where then could he look for a priest, except in the line of Aaron's elder son

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\* Since our information on this subject is so extremely limited, there is a strong temptation to indulge in conjecture. We need to remember how uncertain such conjectures necessarily are. The precedent of Hophni and Phinehas, however, acting together under Eli, having charge of the ark and of its movements, as Zadok and Abiathar had in the time of David, might in one aspect be of no importance, considering the worthless character of these two brothers. And yet it may indicate that there was then a tendency to undervalue the unity of the priesthood. If one chose to indulge further in speculation, he might proceed to ask whether the unexplained transference of the high priesthood from the line of Eleazar to that of Ithamar was connected with the existence of a looser and a stricter party on the question of the extermination of the Canaanites, to which reference was made at p. 124, note ; and whether the line of Eleazar lost the high priesthood because they refused to share it with the line of Ithamar. The dual high priesthood did represent these two lines, that of Eleazar and that of Ithamar. ]

Eleazar, to whom the high priesthood had at first belonged? Absolutely nothing is known of the way in which it came to be lost by the house of Eleazar; yet we see a plausible explanation of their recovering it, when Ahimelech and his family were massacred. Saul may even have set himself to acquire popularity by standing forth as the restorer of the ancient and rightful priestly line. It certainly seems as if he wished to obtain both popularity and plunder by massacring the Gibeonites.

In confirmation of this conjectural reasoning an appeal might be made to the list given in 1 Chron. 12. 23-40, of those "heads of them that were armed for war, which came to David to Hebron, to turn the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of Jehovah." There, in *vv.* 27, 28, mention is made of Jehoiada, leader of the house of Aaron, and with him three thousand and seven hundred; and Zadok, a young man mighty of valour, and of his father's house twenty and two captains. The next verse tells of three thousand of the children of Benjamin, the brethren of Saul, the greatest part of whom had hitherto kept their allegiance to the house of Saul, or kept its ward, as in the A.V. What those Benjamites did Zadok may have done. Saul may probably have raised him from the ordinary priesthood, and have set him over the tabernacle of Moses (as David afterwards set him, 1 Chron. 16. 39). And no likelier occasion for transferring his allegiance from the one royal house to the other has been suggested than this crisis mentioned in 1 Chron. 12.

The most obscure point by far in the history of the tabernacle of Moses is its fate after the ark had been carried into exile by the Philistines. There is no reason whatever to think that the tabernacle remained at Shiloh, a city (perhaps we should rather say a village) which we entirely lose sight of from the time at which the ark went into exile. Where then

did the tabernacle go after it left Shiloh? When David escaped from his house to save himself from Saul's murderous attempts, he paid a short visit to Samuel at Ramah, then he fled from Ramah when Saul came thither; and next we find him with the high priest Ahimelech, who, with the furniture of the tabernacle, was at Nob. It was at Nob that Ahimelech and his numerous priestly house lived; and there they were massacred by Saul. But where exactly Nob was no one has yet discovered. It may be assumed that its situation lay a little to the north of Jerusalem (see *Isai. 10. 32*). It has already been said that there are students of the geography of Palestine who identify it with Mizpah, which was one of Samuel's three sacred places where he made his circuits. It was the one at which the lot was cast before Jehovah, which separated Saul to be king, as it had also been the one which Samuel made the centre of his religious efforts among the people, as these have been recorded in chap. 7.

Whatever may have been the situation of Nob, one can scarcely suppose that the tabernacle would remain there after the massacre of the priests. May not Saul probably have removed it at that time to Gibeon, to be near himself, as at a later time David wished to have it beside himself at Jerusalem? He succeeded in bringing the ark to Jerusalem; but it was not till the Temple which he had planned was built by Solomon that Gibeon lost the glory of keeping the tabernacle. In fact, Nob and Gibeon and Mizpah must all have been very near one another, and also near Saul's city, Gibeon, whatever identifications of them are preferred; on any conceivable settlement of the geographical questions, it is hardly possible that there can be important consequences to the theologian or to the ordinary student of Scripture.

It is incontrovertible that Gibeon was firmly established as the resting-place of the tabernacle for a considerable time pre-

ceding the date of the erection of Solomon's Temple. One manifest proof of this is that David settled Zadok there in charge of the tabernacle, and that it still was there when Solomon, on his accession to the throne, went up to it, as to the great high place, to worship there. The likelihood is that Saul had placed Zadok with the tabernacle in Gibeon at a still earlier time, and that David simply continued him there.\*

And if Samuel's three sacred places came to be less regarded, it is not surprising that Saul should court popularity by choosing Gibeon to become as it were a new Shiloh. It was the place which had been famous as the head of the only Canaanite nation which made peace with Joshua, and as the place which was delivered from the attack of a powerful Canaanite confederacy seeking vengeance on it on the occasion of Joshua's miracle, when the sun stood still upon it, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon. And yet, on account of the deception practised on Joshua and the congregation by the men of Gibeon and its three neighbouring towns, one of which was Kirjath-jearim, where the ark had been long left on its return from exile among the Philistines, Joshua and the elders had reduced the inhabitants of the whole four to the condition of servitude to the house of God and its altar. Like Gibeah and Mizpah, Gibeon lay within the bounds of the tribe of Benjamin, and Joshua gave it to the Levites to be one of their cities. Indeed, the double genealogy in 1 Chron. 8. 29 and onwards, 9. 35 and onwards, seems to make Gibeon the town from which Saul's family took their origin; this might make him the more disposed to honour it by placing the tabernacle there. And while it is necessary to be circumspect

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\* These are statements made in the books of Samuel and Kings, the historical records to which the critical authorities would confine attention. In addition to these, in 1 Chron. 21. 29; 2 Chron. 1. 3, 4, it is expressly asserted that the tabernacle of Moses was at Gibeon, separated from the ark, which was at Jerusalem. Why should a critic refuse to receive this testimony?

in using the slight historical material at our command, it is not improbable that another deed of Saul, bearing certain resemblances to his massacre of the priests at Nob, may have been somehow connected with his choice of Gibeon to be the resting-place of the tabernacle. For it is the very language of Scripture that in his zeal for the children of Israel and Judah, he slew those Gibeonite servants of the house of God (2 Sam. 21. 2, 5), apparently including Beeroth, another of these four towns (2 Sam. 4. 2, 3). And if Gibeon was thus established as the place of the tabernacle, where a colony of daring and unscrupulous Benjamites was planted on the ruins of Gibeonite houses whose inhabitants had been slain, this sanguinary character of the new citizens may have favoured the selection of Gibeon for the deadly tournament which Abner and Joab arranged between the followers of the house of Saul and the followers of David, as recorded in 2 Sam. 2. 12-16. It is possible that it may also have had some connexion with the great stone of Gibeon, mentioned in 2 Sam. 20. 8.

## CHAPTER X.

LITERARY RELATIONSHIP OF I. SAMUEL TO THE  
EARLIER BOOKS.

**D**IFFERENT readers will no doubt carry away different impressions of the traces in these chapters of 1 Samuel of acquaintance with the Pentateuch and the books of Joshua and Judges. For my own part I suggest the following :—

## § 1. In Historical Matters.

(1) The writer of this book (for which one may substitute the plural “writers” if he prefers to do so) makes no reference to his authorities, nor alludes to any other works, always excepting his reference to the Book of Jashar (2 Sam. 1. 18), which closely resembles that given in Josh. 10. 13. In this respect he differs widely from the practice of the writers of the books of Kings and Chronicles. It might be plausibly alleged that he himself was for the most part a contemporary of the events which he describes, and was even an actor in many of them; so that he could not think of quoting authorities. And his style of writing being arranged thus, it is not surprising that he does not name the Pentateuch, nor Joshua, nor Judges, even where his knowledge of them and his references to them are plain enough. Here again a natural explanation occurs, that he and his readers were so familiar with the Pentateuch, etc., that it was unnecessary to name these books. For aught we know, he may have compiled the other two books.

(2) Repeatedly he gives genealogical notices and family



lists (chaps. 1. 1 ; 9, 1 ; 14. 3, 49-51). These may be compared with the genealogies which abound in the Pentateuch ; for its genealogical tendencies may well have impressed a form or character on the later sacred histories.

(3) There are references of a somewhat general or comprehensive kind, not without interesting touches of a more delicate nature, to the early history as given in the Pentateuch. Thus (chap. 12. 8), "When Jacob was come into Egypt, and your fathers cried unto Jehovah, then Jehovah sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your fathers out of Egypt, and made them to dwell in this place." The last clause is an abbreviated statement, at whose accuracy an adversary might carp. It is such as Samuel would scarcely have made except to those who shared with him in a thorough knowledge of the facts recorded, both he and they knowing that Moses and Aaron died before the people were made to dwell in Canaan; but the dying speech of the first Christian martyr has a similar abbreviated statement, no doubt for a similar oratorical reason. The settlement in Canaan was the object aimed at in what is spoken of in the last clause ; but everything else was implied in the bringing forth out of Egypt, the fundamental act of grace which Samuel mentions also in chaps. 8. 8 ; 10. 8. Indeed, it is a frequent theme in the discourses of the prophets, as it runs through the Pentateuch (see especially Exod. 20. 1, 2).

(4) The references are frequent to the tribes which made up the people of Israel. Jehovah speaks of them as "My people" (chap. 9. 16, 17), and so they are "His people" to Samuel (chap. 12. 22), and "His inheritance" (chap. 10. 1). These are familiar expressions to all who know the Pentateuch.

(5) The settlement in Canaan brings up to remembrance the whole Book of Joshua, but there are many particulars of this settlement. The worship in the appointed times and ways, as

will be noted afterwards, is at Shiloh, where the whole congregation under Joshua had set up the tabernacle; there is no appearance of its ever having been moved from there, but the contrary. The people met there, coming from the whole country between Dan and Beer-sheba (chap. 3. 20, 21), as the Book of Joshua describes the limits of the land. Some of the Hebrews are described as going over Jordan at the time of Saul's reverses, to the land of Gad and Gilead (chap. 13. 7); compare 2 Sam. 2. 9. This is just as Joshua describes the position of those eastern tribes. At Beth-shemesh there were Levites (chap. 6. 15), for it was a Levitical city (Josh. 21. 16). After the people at Beth-shemesh had brought a fearful chastisement on themselves by their misconduct in reference to the ark, they sent a command to the men of Kirjath-jearim to come and take the ark to their city (chap. 6. 21), and those men obeyed, for they were part of the Gibeonite servants in bondage to the house of God (Josh. 9). Moreover, Samuel's family belonged to mount Ephraim: as I believe (1 Sam. 1. 2) they were of that portion of the Levitical family of Kohath who were not descendants of Aaron. It was these to whom Joshua gave cities in Ephraim and Western Manasseh and Dan (Josh. 21. 20-26).

(6) The Philistines may not have been quite accurate when the terror of seeing the ark brought into the camp of Israel made them exclaim (chap. 4. 8), "These are the gods that smote the Egyptians with all manner of plagues *in the wilderness.*" But when they were advised to send the ark back to Israel with a guilt offering, it was said, "Peradventure He will lighten His hand from off you, and from off your gods" (chap. 6. 5). What they had found in the case of their god Dagon, and expressed as they did, reminds us of Num. 33. 4: "Their first-born which Jehovah had smitten among them: upon their gods also Jehovah executed judgments."

(7) The whole record of the Book of Judges is implied in chap. 12. 9-11, speaking of the sins of the people and consequent deliverance into the hand of their enemies; then of their repentance, "and Jehovah sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side," that they might serve Him. This reference to the history in the Book of Judges cannot be explained away on account of the admitted obscurity of the name Bedan.

(8) When we read of the unnamed prophet sent to Eli (chap. 2. 27); of the word of Jehovah being precious (or rare) in those days (chap. 3. 1); of bands or companies of prophets at a later time, in connexion with Samuel's work (chap. 10. 5, 10; 19. 20), and of the position of prophets (literally "the prophets") before the end of Saul's reign (chap. 28. 6, 15)—we cannot but think that Samuel laboured to bring about this happy change, which he lived to see, and that he was urged forward and supported by the wish and prayer of Moses (Num. 11. 29), "Would God that all Jehovah's people were prophets, that Jehovah would put His Spirit upon them."

(9) In chap. 2. 27, the man of God speaks to Eli of Jehovah revealing Himself to his father's house in Egypt (see Exod. 4. 14-16, 27, 28, etc.). And in v. 28, "Did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be My priest," etc., he refers to the whole ritual system, as will be noticed in the next division.

(10) "Jehovah appeared again in Shiloh" (chap. 3. 21). The precise meaning of this statement has been debated; but it must refer to some of the manifestations of the divine glory at the tabernacle and the ark. Jehovah, from near or at the ark, called to Samuel, and spoke to him a message for Eli (chap. 3. 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 11). So in Num. 7. 89; 8. 1, 2, when Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with Jehovah, he heard

a voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat, and received a commandment to give to Aaron.

(11) The ark went with Israel to the camp, and was meant to lead and support them (chap. 4. 4 ; 2 Sam. 11. 11 ; compare the movements of the ark in Num. 10, and Josh. 3, and Judges 20. 27, 28).

(12) "Who is able to stand before Jehovah, this holy God" (chap. 6. 20), apparently a reminiscence of Josh. 24. 19.

(13) The use of memorial stones, sometimes with a name attached, chap. 6. 14 ; 7. 12, is as in Josh. 4. 8, 9 ; 7. 26 ; 8. 29, both going back upon cases in the Book of Genesis ; also Josh. 24. 26. Later we never read of them in Scripture.

(14) Samuel's demand for signs of repentance (chap. 7. 3), "Put away the strange gods . . . from among you," is taken, with the change of one preposition, from Gen. 35. 2 ; Josh. 24. 23. Indeed the contexts display considerable resemblance.

(15) Samuel's sacrifice to restore their fellowship with Jehovah, and the altar at his house (chap. 7. 9, 17) may be compared with Josh. 8. 30-35 ; 22. 10, 24, 27 ; perhaps with Exod. 33. 7-11.

(16) The three places which Samuel chose that there he might assemble Israel and judge them (chap. 7. 16) were selected with manifest reference to the past religious history of Israel, as already explained fully.

(17) That the ark was carried captive to Ashdod, Gath, and Ekron, might perhaps be connected with the sparing of the Anakim in Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod (Josh. 11. 22).

(18) The public burial of Samuel by all Israel, in his house at his own city, Ramah (chaps. 25. 1 ; 28. 3), is in accordance with what is recorded of the public burial of the judges from the time of Gideon onwards (Judg. 8. 32, etc., on to 12. 15, perhaps 16. 31).

(19) Saul's remembering the kindness shown to all the children of Israel by the Kenites, the people of Moses' father-in-law, when they came out of Egypt, in contrast to the Amalekites (chap. 15. 6), refers to Exod. 17 and 18 ; Num. 10. 29-32 ; continued in Judg. 1. 16 ; 4. 11.

(20) "Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a (or, the) book, and laid it up before Jehovah" (chap. 10. 25. Compare Josh. 24. 26 ; also both of these with Deut. 31. 9, 24-26).

(21) In chap. 15, the account of Samuel dealing with Saul for his great sin, there are repeated references to the prophecies of Balaam. Thus *vv.* 8 and 18 refer to Num. 24. 20 ; *v.* 29 to Num. 23. 19 ; *v.* 23, the nouns translated "witchcraft" and "iniquity" (R.V. "idolatry") occur in Num. 23. 21, 23, "iniquity" and "divination" being named as sins which were not to be found in Israel, or which were of no avail to conquer Israel.

## § 2. In Legal and Ritual Matters.

(1) In general we read of the position of the children of Israel—all Israel in their tribes, from Dan to Beer-sheba, worshipping at Shiloh (chap. 3. 20, etc). This is in agreement with all the accounts in the Pentateuch, Joshua, and Judges.

(2) Here in Shiloh was "the house of Jehovah" (chaps. 1. 7, 24 ; 3. 15, as already, Exod. 23. 19 ; 34. 26).

(3) Here the hereditary priesthood presided (chaps. 1. 3 ; 2. 27, 28 ; 4. 4). And this priesthood ought to have been everlasting (chap. 2. 30 ; see Lev. 7. 35, 36 ; Num. 18. 8, 9, 11, 19).

(4) This His house is the tabernacle of the congregation, or tent of meeting (chap. 2. 22), with the ark of God in it (chap. 3. 3).

(5) The smiting of those who looked into the ark (or gazed upon it) (chap. 6. 19) may be studied in connexion with the warning commands (Exod. 19. 21 ; Num. 4. 18-20).

(6) Elkanah went up every year, with his family, out of his city to worship and to sacrifice unto Jehovah of hosts in Shiloh ; the completeness of the family worship being evident from the mention of both his wives, and of every son and daughter (chap. 1. 3, 4, 5, 15, 19, 21, 22, etc.). All this was strictly according to the Law.

(7) The three places at which Samuel judged the people, after the worship of Shiloh had ceased on account of the exile of the ark, had the closest possible connexion with the altar at his own house (chap. 7. 15-17). I do not doubt that they were related to the three annual feasts to which all Israel came (Exod. 23. 14-17 ; 34. 18-23 ; with which also compare Deut. 17. 8-13).

(8) Here Hannah made her remarkable vow, yet with the concurrence of her husband (chap. 1. 11, 21, 23-28). This was according to the Law (Num. 30). When Saul imposed a vow which bound the whole army under him at the time (chap. 14. 24-44), it is a case not expressly provided for in the Law, yet natural enough when the people had introduced the kingdom. Nevertheless *v.* 45 shows that the people claimed to have the right to rescue (R.V. margin, to ransom) Jonathan from the consequences of Saul's vow. For the Law recognised money ransoms from death in certain cases (see Exod. 21. 29, 30) ; the only direct prohibition of these being the rule in the case of men devoted (Lev. 27. 29) ; a rule which Samuel insisted on carrying out when he hewed Agag in pieces before Jehovah.

(9) The vow of the Nazirite (chap. 1. 11) is in agreement with Num. 6. A case of this vow for life had already occurred and been known to all Israel, that of Samson.

(10) The women who did service assembling at the door

of the tent of meeting (chap. 2. 22) are elsewhere mentioned only in Exod. 38. 8 ; that is, unless Jephthah's daughter was one of them.

(11) There are things said incidentally, as it were, of the priests and the sacrifices, and these exactly correspond with what is written in the Law. In chap. 2. 28, "Did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be My priest, to go up unto (or, to offer upon, A.V.) Mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before Me? And did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings of the children of Israel made by fire?" In *v.* 29, sacrifice and offerings are said to have been commanded in (or, to) His habitation. Burnt offerings and peace offerings are mentioned together (chaps. 10. 8 ; 13. 9) in the order in which these are placed in the sacrificial laws ; which order is confirmed at 13. 10, 12, where Samuel's appearance interrupts Saul's intention to offer peace offerings as well. Observe also the burnt offering alone in another case of interrupted worship (chap. 7. 9, 10). The mention of peace offerings alone (chap. 11. 15) merely suggests that those were the completion of the whole sacrificial service, in accordance with the ritual in Leviticus, as indeed they marked the attainment of the happiness of that day. So also there is the burning of the fat, and the giving of their portion to the priests (chap. 2. 12-17). So also 9. 19-23, and perhaps 10. 3, 4. It is also to be remembered that the guilt offering (A.V., trespass offering) (Lev. 5. 14—6. 7) is very much less mentioned than those other sacrifices, either in the Law or in the history. Yet it appears that the Philistines were led by their priests and diviners to regard it as the appropriate sacrifice to bring to the God of Israel, on account of their trespass and sin, "in the holy things of Jehovah" (Lev. 5. 15), just as an Israelite might have done. The characteristic of the guilt offering was a payment "with thy estimation by shekels of silver."

And the Philistine priests estimated this at five golden emerods and five golden mice (chap. 4. 3, 14).

(12) There is also the casting the sacred lot, making inquiry of God for the congregation or the king (chap. 10. 19-22, and throughout chap. 14; also 22. 9-16; 23. 4-12; 30. 7, 8); in some of which cases the high-priestly functions are made the more prominent by the additional mention of the ephod (23. 6; 30. 7), with which compare the Urim (chap. 28. 6). Among the passages in the Pentateuch referred to in these statements, see Exod. 28. 30; Num. 27. 21; also see Josh. 7. 13-21.

(13) The comprehensive word, to "minister," already of frequent occurrence in the Pentateuch, is applied to Samuel (chaps. 2. 11, 18; 3. 1), "before Jehovah," or, "before Eli the priest."

(14) There are several articles of the furniture of the tabernacle named. *The lamp of God* (chap. 3. 3); *the* (not a) *vial of oil* (10. 1); as to these, see Exod. 25. 31-39; 29. 7; 30. 22-33, etc.; Lev. 24. 1-4. Also *the shewbread*, hallowed bread, was taken away on a day which probably was the sabbath, but immediately replaced by new bread. The Law appointed twelve loaves, of which five were asked by David; not lawful to be given to him, yet given by the high priest in consideration of David's extremity, on the assurance that his young men were free from gross pollution (chap. 21. 3-6); with which notice compare 20. 26; 2 Sam. 11. 4. The corresponding passages in the Law are such as Lev. 24. 5-9; 22. 3-7; 15, etc. In later Hebrew, except in 2 Chron. 4. 19, it is another expression which is used: we might translate it, to indicate this, *row-bread* instead of *shew-bread*. The new expression is probably derived, however, from the command in Lev. 24. 6, 7, to put the bread in *rows*; see also Exod. 40. 23.

(15) The feast of the new moon when David would have



been expected to sit at the king's table, that is, unless prevented by ceremonial uncleanness (chap. 20. 5, 18, 24, 29), is in agreement with the laws for the feasts on the new moon (Lev. 23. 1, 2, 24, 25; Num. 28. 11-15; 29. 1), more highly developed in so far as the introduction of the kingdom demanded. Later on the new moon stands side by side with the sabbath itself (2 Kings 4. 23; Ezek. 46. 1, 3).

(16) Eating of blood was a transgression (chap. 14. 32-34). It is strictly forbidden (Lev. 3. 17; 7. 26, 27; 17. 10, 14). "Saul put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land" (chap. 28. 3, 9). The same nouns are used in the prohibitions of the Law, enforced by the penalty of death (Lev. 19. 31; 20. 6, 27; Deut. 18. 11).

(17) The peculiar description of Doeg at the tabernacle, where the high priest was, against whom he seems to have borne a grudge, "detained before Jehovah" (chap. 21. 7), is without any very close analogy throughout the Old Testament. And yet it is used in a manner that seems to take for granted that every one would understand what was meant. It is difficult to refrain from taking it to refer to some exercise of discipline, such as the high priest must have had the right to exercise in the House of God; as for instance, keeping back unclean or otherwise unsuitable persons from taking part in the services and privileges of the congregation. Of such discipline, however, perhaps the only definite example is in the case of lepers (Lev. chaps. 13, 14; Num. 12); yet more is hinted at in "the priests' estimation" (Lev. 5. 15, 18; 6. 6; 27. 2, etc.).

(18) The law of the kingdom as especially brought in in chaps. 8 and 10 has already been fully examined in connexion with Deut. 17. 14-20; it is unnecessary to say more here.

(19) The devoting of the Amalekites (chap. 15) goes back on the laws in Lev. 27. 28, 29; Deut. 7. 26; 13. 12-18; and

also on the comprehensive command to devote the seven nations of Canaan. Attention must also be given to the special curse upon the Amalekites in Exod. 17. 14-16 ; Deut. 25. 17-19.

### § 3. In Points of Verbal Resemblance.

(1) The verb translated "kick" is found only in the description of Eli's wicked family, and in that of degenerate Jeshurun (chap. 2. 29, and Deut. 32. 15).

(2) A very rare verb (in the same form, as Hebrew grammarians express it) is used to describe the wonderful works of Jehovah when He broke down the strength of Egypt in their struggle to hold Israel in bondage : in 1 Sam. 6. 6, "wrought wonderfully"; in Exod. 10. 2, "what things I have wrought." It is difficult to avoid thinking of the one passage as borrowed from the other. Probably the preferable rendering is that of the R.V. margin, "made a mock of," as Balaam used the verb (Num. 22. 29).

(3) The unique use of a verb (which is common enough) in chap. 9. 17: A.V. translates "reign," and R.V. "have authority." The only similar expression is the use of the cognate noun (Judg. 18. 7), where the two margins are, A.V. "Possessor, or heir of restraint," and R.V., "Power of restraint." Had not the writer this passage before him ?

(4) The apparent contradiction as regards God's repenting and not repenting (chap. 15. 11, 35, and yet *v.* 29). The latter is another of Samuel's reminiscences of Balaam, Num. 23. 19, the former of Gen. 6. 6.

(5) The verb and the noun which are generally rendered in the R.V., "discomfit," "discomfiture," but more variously in the A.V., occur repeatedly in Samuel, as chaps. 5. 9, 11 ; 7. 10 ; 14. 20 ; also 2 Sam. 22. 15. Apparently the notion of panic, as the Greeks understood it, a sudden terror from God, is in

the word. And so it is used in the Pentateuch (Exod. 14. 24 ; 23. 27 ; Deut. 2. 15 ; 7. 23 ; 28. 20) ; and in Josh. 10. 10 and Judg. 4. 15.

(6) A verb is used of the Spirit of Jehovah "coming mightily," in the R.V. (chap. 10. 6, 10 ; 11. 6 ; 16. 13), describing how he fitted Saul and David for their public duties. So it had been already used to describe the judge Samson (Judg. 14. 6, 19 ; 15. 14). It is the verb ordinarily translated "prosper" (Num. 14. 11), as afterwards it is applied to Israel's true king (Psalm 45. 4).

(7) There is a noun descriptive of some kind of idols, perhaps household gods, *Teraphim* (chap. 15. 23 ; 19. 13, 16). It is found already in Gen. 31. 19, 34, 35, and repeatedly in the history of Micah and the Danites (Judg. 17 and 18) ; afterwards only four times.

#### § 4. Differences suggesting that Samuel is the Later Book.

(1) The new title of Jehovah—Jehovah of hosts.

(2) The introduction of fasting as a religious observance, (chap. 7. 6, as again 31. 13 ; 2 Sam. 1. 12 ; 12. 16). The only earlier example of this is at Judg. 20. 26.

(3) Samuel's three places of co-ordinate meeting for Israel (chap. 7. 16), after the desolation of Shiloh, as fully explained already.

(4) Perhaps that first building of an altar by Saul (chap. 14. 35), whether it was an imitation and adaptation to his own circumstances of Samuel's precedent, or an application of Exod. 20. 24.

(5) The introduction of phrases befitting a military people under their king. Such a noun (and the case of the verb is similar) is that translated "armies" in chaps. 4. 2, 12, 16 ; 17. 8, 10, 21-23, 26, 36, 45, 48, and only again in 1 Chron. 12.

38; but more exactly at times, especially in the margin, "ranks" or "array." The word does occur even in the Pentateuch in the general sense of "order" or "rows," as of the lamps in the tabernacle (Exod. 39. 37), and of the shewbread in rows (Lev. 24. 6, 7). So is the noun, used both in the masculine and feminine form, as if not quite fixed by usage (chap. 17. 20; 26. 5), A.V. "trench," R.V. "place of the wagons." Perhaps such another word is the participle "his spear *stuck* in the ground" (chap. 26. 7): it occurs elsewhere only twice, in meanings remote from the present one. It may indicate something of the respect shown to the tent of the commander-in-chief.

(6) There is the appearance of a new form of expression "God do so to me (or thee or him) and more also" (chap. 3. 17; 14. 44; 20. 13; 25. 22; 2 Sam. 3. 9, 35; 19. 13 (Heb. 14); also 1 Kings 2. 23; 19. 2; 20. 10; 2 Kings 6. 31). It had already appeared in Ruth 1. 17.

(7) There may now and then appear a word otherwise unknown, and so perhaps peculiar to the writer, such is the noun translated "present" in chap. 9. 7, for which no cognate word has been suggested with any probability, unless it be the verb in Isai. 57. 9, "And thou wentest to the king with ointment."

(8) There appear also the names of musical instruments which have not been mentioned in the history of the earlier times (1 Sam. 10. 5; 2 Sam. 6. 5), except the timbrel in Exod. 15. 20.

## CHAPTER XI.

## RECAPITULATION.

WE have now traced the history of Samuel, his character and his work. He belonged to a family of the tribe of Levi, that tribe which as a whole was entrusted with the service of the House of God, though distinct from the priests and subordinate to them. His parents were conspicuous on account of their godly profession and conduct, like the parents of John the Baptist ; and, like them, they dedicated the son for whom they had long prayed to the special service of Jehovah throughout his natural life. In the Old Testament history we observe how it was frequently God's method to raise up remarkable individuals, fitted with special grace for the circumstances in which He placed them. They took the work up as it lay to their hand, and, they left a mark upon their time, whose influence was traceable for generations after they themselves were gone from this world.

It was Samuel's privilege and bounden duty to be like a second Moses, to have the care of the entire commonwealth of Israel upon his shoulders. In view of the pressing wants of his time, as the singular period of the Judges was rapidly drawing to a close, he had to remedy the evils which afflicted the body politic, alike in its civil and in its spiritual condition. It is thus that we read of a marvellous revival of spiritual life over the whole extent of Israel, from Dan to Beer-sheba ; and of new life breathed into the three great offices which

were the ordinary channels for God's grace among His people, namely, the prophetic, the priestly, and the magisterial, the last of these attaining its highest form in the kingly.

(1) All Israel knew and recognised, throughout the whole extent of the land which God had promised and had given to them, that Samuel was established to be a *prophet* of Jehovah. He laid up before Jehovah what he had committed to writing, his own special contribution to the body of divine messages which Israel received. In doing this he acted as Joshua had done before him; and both of these saintly men copied the pattern left them by the first great messenger from the God of their fathers. From 1 Chron. 29. 29 we learn that he wrote much more than this, that he was the divinely recognised historian of his time; and the supposition is natural and probable that he was the literary legatee or executor in respect of all that Jehovah had made known to Israel from the time of the death of Moses to the new era which is associated with his own name.\* This is the more likely, since, at all events, the subsequent history of Israel was written by a multitude of prophetic writers, some of them known to us only by name, some not even named. Yet, by universal consent, Samuel stands at the head of the line of prophets, whose succession, with "their price far above rubies," forms the most brilliant embodiment of those graces with which Jehovah adorned His people.

(2) Samuel was the last of the line of *judges*. But if that

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\* In accordance with what is said in the passages to which allusion has been made, such as Exod. 17. 14-16; 24. 4-9; Num. 33. 2; Deut. 17. 18; 27. 8; 28. 58; 31. 9, 24-27; Josh. 24. 26, 27; 1 Sam. 10. 25. There might be a considerable amount of such literary matter laid up in the sanctuary at Shiloh; and when this sanctuary was broken up and the ark went into exile, the same thing would take place that is seen many a time on occasion of the dying out of an old family and the destruction of the family seat; the old records would be dispersed and lost, unless some one like Samuel was on the spot to receive and accept the charge of them. His twenty years of waiting would give him time for making good use of these.

illustrious line of servants of Jehovah and His people came to an end in the person of Samuel, it was because it became merged in the kingly office. Samuel had been the chief magistrate of the commonwealth of Israel, and his office had been administered with as much dignity in his own person, and with as much advantage to the state, as in the case of the most distinguished of his predecessors. At the call of the people, and not without direction asked from God and lovingly granted, he handed over his office to Saul, the first king. He did so deliberately and circumspectly; and in the successive steps we trace obvious indications of the actings of one who was prophet as well as judge. However, the people were seriously in the wrong in their attitude and their proceedings, and very soon it became apparent that Saul their king was not to be the blessing which they had fondly imagined. Yet the grace of God was seen triumphing over difficulties when Samuel received the command to anoint David, to take the position which Saul had forfeited. David must be regarded as the representative of Samuel in his ideas and his administration, perhaps as completely as one man can be of another. David's own shortcomings, however, proved that even a man after God's own heart may fail when sitting on the throne of Jehovah in Israel. And still more, David's house was "not so with God," as he sorrowfully acknowledged in his last inspired words, even while he took refuge in the consoling assurance, "Yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." All the splendours of Solomon's reign could not hide the blemishes which Samuel had foretold as inherent in their fleshly kingdom; and the lamentable rending of the kingdom in two, and the setting up of a new royal house over the Ten Tribes again and again, only brought the more prominently into view the hopelessness of the case. An instance or evidence of this is the extermination of each of

these royal houses by the founder of a new dynasty. To be sure, this is not said of the house of Jehu, when its last king was murdered. But the subsequent anarchy is a sufficient explanation of this seeming exception. With one apparent exception there never was a dynasty afterwards—some murderer seized the crown, only to be in turn murdered by a new competitor for it. Meanwhile the house of David itself was ever losing more and more of the old glories; and the prophet Jeremiah, on whom devolved the mournful duty of watching its decline and fall, had to announce the ruin of the last three kings, whose character and experiences utterly belied their names,\* and to proclaim the coming of the righteous Branch promised to David, whose name should be called, "Jehovah our righteousness" (Jer. 22. 13—23. 6). When this prediction was taken up by the most conspicuous of the prophets after the Exile (Zech. 3. 8; 6. 9-15), this Branch is typified, not only by Zerubbabel, or Zorobabel, of the line of David, but also by Joshua the high priest: "He shall bear the glory and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne."

(3) Of the *priestly* office exercised by Samuel, less is said than of the offices of prophet and king; yet in the salvation of Israel the three offices cannot be separated, and there is evidence enough that Samuel acted as priest, having been practically adopted thereto by Eli, with respect at least to some of its functions. It is certainly true that "no man taketh the honour to himself but when he is called of God, even as was Aaron" (Heb. 5. 4). This honour, however, must have been included in Samuel's call, and he could justify his action both by the general call of Israel to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, and also by the stress of the

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\* Jehoiakim, "Jehovah will raise up"; Jehoiachin or Jeconiah, "Jehovah will establish"; and Zedekiah, "The righteousness of Jehovah."



times in which he lived, when the House of Jehovah and the high-priestly family were disgraced by abounding gross pollutions. Owing to the intimate connexion of the three offices, it is to be noted that the music of the trumpets of the priests, the only musical service mentioned in the legislation of Moses, was supplemented, one might almost say it was thrown completely into the background, by the singing of the sacred songs of Samuel and his pupils. Strictly this was within the department of the prophets; only the offices of priest and prophet were blended together in the reforms of Samuel, not placed in a position of rivalry, according to a frequent misapprehension.

There was a striking change in respect of the high-priestly family as the degraded house of Eli became more and more enfeebled, while Samuel sacrificed and performed other priestly functions for all Israel in different places according to an elaborate arrangement of his own. This led on to the unprecedented arrangement for a dual priesthood in the reign of David, in connexion with a modification in the *personnel* of the high-priesthood. But it issued in the entire displacement of the house of Eli. There was an equally complete change in respect of the place at which the tabernacle was set up. Shiloh lost the tabernacle and the ark, which had remained there from the time that Joshua conquered the land. After various movements from place to place, with which Samuel was more or less connected, the ark came to rest at Jerusalem, which became at once the civil and the ecclesiastical metropolis of Israel. But Jerusalem, in which Solomon had erected his magnificent temple, was polluted by at least three great idolatrous high places which the same monarch erected to the gods of his wives. And these high places remained unremoved, even by the best of David's successors, until the great reformer Josiah took them away

(2 Kings 23. 13). Under other kings it could be said, "According to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah" (Jer. 2. 28). Ezekiel's temple is known to us through a vision of spiritual privileges vastly in advance of those granted in the arrangements made first by Moses and then by Solomon on the lines of Samuel and David; and something similar is dimly outlined in the revelation in Dan. 9. 20-27; Mal. 1. 10, 11.

The apostle Peter places Samuel at the head of the line of prophets who came after Moses, yet looked back to the still earlier promises which God had given to the fathers in the form of a covenant; and he says that, by what they did and foretold, they carried the people of Israel forward to the grand fulfilment. "Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus (better in the R.V., His servant), sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities" (Acts 3. 24-26).

Suppose, for the sake of argument, that there had been no such person as Samuel, or that we have a disjointed collection of reports about him, at the best not exactly historical, rather with exaggerations and mythical elements, the whole being an attempt to patch up a unity in the traditions about one who had perhaps been a bold fighter against the enemies of his country, and perhaps a clairvoyant, and in this character much consulted in the little country town in which he lived. Suppose that this had been all; what a blank there would be in the very things which we should most wish to know in the history of Israel. We should have lost the key to the heart of that history. We should be left, as many of extensive learning and remarkable industry and acuteness have been left, to make our way through a mass of what would then be accounted fables and errors, by dint of our own conjectures, aided or controlled by certain philosophical principles which

we had assumed as our axioms. To many people, no doubt, there is a pleasurable excitement in writing or reading a novel, such as they do not find in writing or reading a history. Let them, at all events, if this is what they choose to do, fully consider what are the consequences of their occupation.

This monograph on Samuel deals with history pure and simple. The aim has been to begin by taking the account of Samuel given in the Bible as being what it professes to be, and to discuss it with willingness to do justice to the statements, yet at the same time to put their reasonableness and verisimilitude to the test of close examination. Surely the issue of this examination has been to show that every alleged trait in his character, and every act attributed to him in the narrative has commended itself to the intelligent and truth-loving inquirer as historical. The whole of the details fit into what we know of the age in which Samuel lived, and find their confirmation in consequences, good and evil, which were wrought in succeeding generations, until we come to the end of that kingdom and the ruin of that commonwealth which were inseparably united with Samuel's thoughts and aspirations and activities.

A thousand years after the death of Samuel we find ourselves near the threshold of the kingdom of heaven; and He whom Samuel foreshadowed as Prophet, Priest, and King, comes on the scene.

## APPENDIX.

### NOTE A (PAGE 63).

#### CRITICAL DISCUSSIONS ON THE SONG OF HANNAH.

THE general opinion of the critical circle, perhaps now their unanimous opinion, is that Hannah did not compose this poem which bears her name. Professor Henry P. Smith says : "The author or the final redactor here puts into the mouth of Hannah a song of praise. Careful examination shews that it has no particular reference to her circumstances." Professor Driver, in his notes on the text, says of *v.* 10, "It is plain that this verse, at any rate, cannot have been spoken by Hannah, even granting that the allusion is to the *ideal* king. The ideal itself, in a case like the present, presupposes the actual (notice especially the expression, *His anointed*), and the thoughts of the prophets of Israel can only have risen to the conception of an ideal king after they had witnessed the establishment of the monarchy in their midst. Far more probably, however, the reference is to the actual king." This position is one which I cannot agree to take ; so that what is a plain inference to him does not in the least commend itself to me. In the text I have referred to promises of kings from their loins made to Abraham and Jacob. To Abraham these are promises in the line of Isaac, himself in the first instance the promised seed ;

though there were also to be princes and a great nation in the line of Ishmael (Gen. 17. 16, 20). It is said that kings should come out of the loins of Jacob (Gen. 35. 11), and this promise is quickly followed, at chap. 36. 31, by a list of "the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel." References have also been made to the Books of Numbers and Deuteronomy, and, besides, there is the express law of the kingdom given in Deut. 17. 14-20.

The critical reply, as in many other cases, is that all these are late passages, an assertion for which I have found nothing which I dare call evidence. Yet, for argument's sake, granting that these passages were written later, do they represent what was then the general belief in Israel, indeed, the uncontradicted belief? What satisfactory account can be given of the origination of such belief? Once more, the Book of Judges is proof of the strength of this kingly idea or anticipation in the minds of the people. There is their conviction that the patriarchal government among the tribes was growing too feeble for the necessities of the nation, and their willingness, or rather their fixed purpose, to entrust more and more power into the hands of the judge, and to transform their constitution and government into something like an elective monarchy. The call to Eli the high priest to be also the judge suggests to us how familiar had become the thought of a strengthened executive, after the experiences the people had had of very imperfect deliverances by successive judges, whom Jehovah had raised up, in consequence of successive apostacies and the chastisements which followed.

This thought was seething in the minds of the people with renewed force as a result of the helplessness of the aged Eli and the abominable misconduct of his sons. There was utter failure on the part of the man and his house. And Hannah,

as an inspired poetess, took in the situation, and, starting from her own experience, gave voice to the needs of the time and the wishes of her people. It may be difficult to delineate with precision the thoughts which stirred her motherly mind in connexion with the gift of this son to her as the result of her wrestling prayers with tears. But she certainly had been fitted for bringing up this son to be a special servant of God in ways which she did not yet comprehend. She may have lived to see him raised to a higher position than even Eli's. Yet it is extremely improbable that she could have lived long enough to see the misbehaviour of her son's family, and to hear the voice of thunder in which the nation called for a king at his hands. Of this much, however, she might feel assured, that whensoever a king should be given by Jehovah, he would be "His king," and would be in some way in close connexion with "His anointed." The peculiar expression "throne of glory" is in the original Hebrew the same as in Jer. 17. 12, "A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary." The passage may then be taken to contain at least an allusion by the prophet to Hannah's words. And there are two observations which any thoughtful reader might make on it for himself. The first is, that the prophet connects this "throne" with "the place of our sanctuary," as Hannah connects "His king" with "His anointed." The second is, that he says of this throne that it was "from the beginning"; not a novelty, of which Hannah could scarcely have spoken, as the critics think, but a rooted faith which was familiar from the beginning to every genuine member of the commonwealth of Israel.

Dr. Driver goes on to say: "And indeed in style and tone the Song throughout bears the marks of a later age than that of Hannah." Style and tone will be differently estimated by different individuals. Replying for myself as an individual, my

knowledge of Hannah's own age is so very limited, that I have not observed anything in style and tone to make it unnatural to ascribe the Song to the time of Hannah. The limitations of my knowledge on this subject impress me the more, because anything I do know of her and her age I may say I have learned exclusively from documents in whose trustworthiness the critics have little confidence; so that I do not know well how to discuss the subject with them. So far as I see or know, I am quite satisfied with the style and tone of the Song as befitting the authoress to whom it is attributed in Scripture. I should like to learn what they know of the age of Hannah which ordinary readers of the Bible have not discovered.

However, Dr. Driver proceeds: "Nor do the thoughts appear as the natural expression of one in Hannah's position. Observe, for instance, the prominence given to 'the bows of the mighty are broken.'" What is there about the bow which should raise this objection? There is repeated notice of the bow in these Books of Samuel, as of an object very much in the popular thought of the time. It was of his bow that Jonathan stripped himself in order to do honour to David after he had slain Goliath. It was the Philistine archers, with their bows, who found Saul and wounded him mortally. David bade the men of Judah be taught "the bow" (2 Sam. 1, 18) (however we interpret this statement), when he lamented over the slain king of Israel and his heroic son, one of the clauses in his dirge being, "the bow of Jonathan turned not back." And in David's great song of praise (Psalm 18), he says, "A bow of steel is broken by mine arms." If one goes outside of the Books of Samuel he sees how prominent the bow was in the conceptions of the people, in Gen. 48. 22; 49. 24; Josh. 24. 12, and a number of passages in the Psalms and the Prophets, etc. These make it plain that not merely the literal bow was prominent in the thoughts of the Israelites in Hannah's age, as

also earlier and later; but further, that it was a natural expression for any of the weapons, or all of them, by which a man might suffer, whether in a literal or in a metaphorical contest. The general considerations which Dr. Driver concludes by presenting, show a disposition to give a very personal character to the thoughts and feelings of the writer of the Song, "on the ground of some humiliation which, as it seems, has recently befallen his foes"; yet he hesitates between the two suppositions that "the poet is a king, who alludes to himself in the third person," and that it is rather a national than an individual song, "spoken originally in the name of the people, and intended to depict Israel's triumph over the heathen and the ungodly." The latter of these suppositions is in some respects not far from the commonly received opinion that Hannah, the individual, rises above her personal matters, which tinge the thought and language, to the thoughts which filled her mind now that her vow was answered, and that she felt herself to be a godly "mother in Israel," as Deborah styled herself. Only Dr. Driver keeps true to the conjectural tendencies of the critic. He says "*v.* 2 interrupts the connexion; and may not be part of the original poem; if it be removed, the Song will consist of four equal strophes of eight lines each." Those readers of Scripture who have met with numbers of these irregularities in Hebrew as in English poetry, will think it right to refuse to throw aside this second verse, the keystone on which rests the repeated mention of Jehovah throughout the Song. For Hannah's purpose this verse does the opposite of interrupting the connexion: "There is none holy as Jehovah; for there is none beside Thee: neither is there any rock like our God."

If we examine the thoughts in this poem, we may have evidence enough that its expressions are in themselves natural to one who had experimental acquaintance with the dealings



of God our Saviour, and who rose, as every saint more or less rises, from her individual experience of weakness and want and danger and shame and suffering, along with God's gracious supplies adapted to her case, in answer to her prayer, to the wider view of the circumstances of her fellow-saints, and those of the whole Church, of which she feels herself to be a true member. I am also persuaded that we may trace connexions between her song of praise and those of other preceding servants of God, especially Miriam, who had taken part in the Song of Moses (perhaps as a prophetess she had a share in composing it) and Deborah. In an age in which books were rare, at least as we should reckon, there were poems and prophecies, particularly certain dying blessings, which were given for the sake of the deep and lasting impression which they were to make on the people of God from age to age. Hannah's keynote may be said to be, "Because I rejoice in Thy salvation." In speaking so, did she not go back upon the first use of this word in Jacob's dying blessing (Gen. 49. 18), "I have waited for thy salvation, O Jehovah"? The word was taken up by Moses, who said to despairing Israel at the Red Sea, "Stand still, and see the salvation of Jehovah"; to which the words in his Song refer: "Jehovah is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation" (Exod. 14. 13; 15. 2).

This word, salvation, became a very common term in all later religious utterances, especially in the Psalms and in Isaiah; but is not this because Jacob and Moses, with Miriam and Hannah, began the use of it? So it appears in that great Song in Deut. 32, which Moses taught the people for future use, in all their times of falling away and of gracious recovery. Thus, v. 15, Jeshurun "lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation." There are other references in the Song of Hannah to the Song of Moses. Her second verse, "There is none holy as Jehovah; for there is none beside Thee," bears a strong resemblance to

Moses' fourth ; and both describe Jehovah as "the Rock," which Moses continues to do in *vv.* 15, 18, 30, 31. Compare her allusions to pride and arrogance with what Moses says (*vv.* 15, 20, 27) ; her view of the uselessness of strength with which to prevail, apart from Jehovah, with Moses' words (*v.* 39), "See, now, that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with Me : I kill, and I make alive ; I have wounded, and I heal : and there is none that can deliver out of My hand." Hannah makes the pride of the ungodly come out in their talk, which she forbids ; and Jehovah by Moses speaks of the judgments He would send on His own people (*v.* 27), "Were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries . . . . should say, Our hand is exalted, and Jehovah hath not done all this." Compare how Hannah describes the adversaries of Jehovah, while struggling against Him, as being broken in pieces, with the language of Moses in *vv.* 35, 36. "To Me belongeth vengeance and recompence . . . . the things that are to come upon them shall make haste. For Jehovah shall judge His people, and repent Himself for His servants, when He seeth that their power is gone," etc.

And similar traces of Hannah's words are found in the other great legacy of Moses, his dying blessing to the tribes, in Deut. 33. There (*v.* 17) we meet with the metaphorical use of the "horn," which occurs twice in Hannah's Song (*vv.* 1, 10) ; it is not found again in the Old Testament till much later. Hannah (in *v.* 9) uses the Hebrew word which is variously translated "saints," "holy ones," and "godly ones." Moses has the word in *v.* 8. But neither does this word occur again till later, chiefly in the Psalms. Before the tribe of Levi accepted heartily its position of holy obedience, Levi is described by Moses (*v.* 8) as one of those with whom Jehovah strove ; but of those who strive with Him Hannah predicts that they shall be broken to pieces (*v.* 10). In that verse she says, "Jehovah

shall judge the ends of the earth ” ; so Moses (*v.* 17) promised that the horns of Joseph should “ push the people, all of them, even to the ends of the earth.” And the phrase “ the ends of the earth ” appears often in the Psalms and in some of the Prophets. Perhaps Hannah’s repetitions, “ There is none holy as Jehovah ; for there is none beside Thee : neither is there any rock like our God,” are variations of Deut. 33. 26, “ There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun ” ; and the second clause of *v.* 29, “ O people saved by Jehovah ” may have led Hannah to say, when she began to sing, yet using the noun where Moses had used the verb, “ I rejoice in Thy salvation.”

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NOTE B (PAGE 76).

“JEHOVAH APPEARED AGAIN IN SHILOH.” (1 Sam. 3. 21.)

MORE than this would be implied if the clause “ Jehovah appeared again in Shiloh ” is understood in the sense that Jehovah had formerly appeared in Shiloh, and appeared now again there visible to all, after an interval during which His miraculous presence had been unknown. If this interpretation be adopted, there is no historical event to which we can look back so probably as the incident related in Judg. 2. 1-5. This event occurred at Bochim, a place whose name is entirely strange to us. The word is the participle of the Hebrew verb *to weep*, and the name is expressly said to have been given on account of the weeping of “ all the children of Israel,” to whom a solemn authoritative rebuke had been addressed by the Angel of Jehovah. Where was this place ? and what was its name before such a descriptive name was imposed upon it ? Sometimes the earlier name has perished from memory, perhaps

on account of the interest attaching to the new name ; sometimes both have been preserved. There are examples of both kinds in the history of Jacob, without going further, in Peniel and in Beth-el and Luz. No conjecture seems more probable than that the place was Shiloh—that at one of the great annual feasts or trysts for which all the males in Israel were bound to assemble, they were rebuked for leaving the idolatrous inhabitants of the land to pollute it, and to ensnare them ; and that this rebuke was given by the Angel of Jehovah in person—He who had led them up and all through had been the hope of Moses and of the rest of the godly as their leader, not without visible signs of His presence, from the borders of Egypt to the borders of the land which He had promised to give them. (See Exod. 23. 20–25 ; 32. 34 ; 33. 1–3 ; and also Josh. 5. 13—6. 2 ; for the revelation of Himself as the Captain of Jehovah's host, which revelation He made to Joshua at Jericho.) The most singular detail in the narrative in Judg. 2. 1 is that “the Angel of Jehovah” (“*an* angel of Jehovah,” in A.V., is not the translation of the Hebrew text) “came up from Gilgal to Bochim.” Gilgal was the first place in which the children of Israel encamped after they had crossed the Jordan, and there they kept their first Passover in the land of Canaan. It is only conjecture, then ; yet may not one, as he feels how ignorant he is, ask whether all the known facts might not hang together on the following supposition ? Suppose that at Gilgal the children of Israel were deprived of the guidance of the pillar of cloud and fire, as it certainly was there and then that they were deprived of the manna which had been their other heavenly support in their journey through the wilderness. The Angel of Jehovah was He who had gone before them in the pillar of cloud from the day on which they had entered the wilderness, and who had changed His place as He moved in that pillar, so as to help Israel against the Egyptians in the passage of the Red Sea ;

and who, after that passage had been accomplished, looked forth through that pillar and discomfited the Egyptian host. Thereafter He never left the host of Israel till He set them safely down on the soil of Canaan. (See *Exod.* 13. 21, 22; 14. 19, 20, 24, etc.) The singular expression now under consideration might mean that the Angel of Jehovah, assuming some visible form again, moved from Gilgal to Bochim, that is, Shiloh, to meet all Israel assembled for the Passover or other feast, and rebuked them. And the penitent people gave the name of Bochim to the place of their weeping, and offered their sacrifices. This appearance of the great Angel, to rebuke those who had watched with terror His movement to them from Gilgal, would correspond with many cases in which the glory of Jehovah appeared at the door of the tabernacle to terrify and humble the people who had been at strife with Moses.

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#### NOTE C (PAGE 90).

##### THE BOOK OF JASHAR.

IT is of little use to indulge in speculations about the Book of Jashar (*A.V. Jasher*), that is, the Upright; we know nothing more than that two poems are quoted from it in *Josh.* 10. 12-15, and in *2 Sam.* 1. 17-27. There may be something at the foundation of guesses that have been made, if one might suppose that it was a collection of sacred poems celebrating Jeshurun, upright men in Israel who had done service to the cause of God in Israel; perhaps, also, that this anthology began to take shape not later than the time of Joshua, and was not yet completed before David wrote his dirge over Saul and Jonathan. The Book of Jashar, then, might bear some an-

alogy or relation to the Book of the Wars of Jehovah, from which a poem is extracted in Num. 21. 14, 15 ; compare two other poems in that same chapter (*vv.* 16-18, 27-30). If those poems gave utterance to the new life in the young generation of Israelites, who had been delivered from the bondage of Egypt and trained under Moses, the generation which he was leaving under the care of Joshua, the Book of Jashar might be the expression of the similar life beginning with Joshua's conquest of Canaan, and never exhausted till Samuel and David anew wedded poetry and music to the service of God in that remarkable age which had them as its guides. For the continuity of this long period observe the words of the martyr Stephen, as he expounded the connexion of the parts of Old Testament history (Acts 7. 44-46) : "Our fathers had the tabernacle of the testimony in the wilderness, even as He appointed who spake unto Moses, that he should make it according to the figure that he had seen. Which also our fathers, in their turn, brought in with Joshua when they entered on the possession of the nations which God thrust out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David, who found favour in the sight of God, and asked to find a habitation for the God of Jacob."

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## NOTE D (PAGE 158).

## THE CONSTITUTIONAL STATUTE OF THE REALM OF ISRAEL.

It is never to be forgotten that there was a constitutional statute of the realm, accompanied by illustrations of the way in which the rights of the people were in danger of being infringed, and the rights of the invisible King in danger of

being neglected or defied. Of course, when we speak of the kingdom of Israel being a constitutional state, it would be absurd to trace a parallel between it and a constitution like that of Great Britain, on the principle of representative government with elected legislators. Such representative government was unknown in the republics of ancient Greece, as it is unknown in some of the most democratic cantons of modern Switzerland. The foundation of Israelite society was the patriarchal system, which has affinities with the utmost freedom of home and family life on the one hand, and on the other, with the authority of a sovereign ruler. I have pointed out that the kingly element was within the limits of the promises made to the patriarch, and also within the compass of the laws given to Israel by Moses. But,

*First.*—In Egypt the Israelites had elders, to whom Moses addressed himself as he began the execution of his great commission to deliver them from their bondage. And they had a worship of the God of their fathers, to which they were bound, at least in theory and by more or less of sentiment. Before they left Egypt, this religious worship had been enriched by the law of the Passover, and their calendar was subjected to an alteration, being modified in the interests of the great redemption which had transformed them into a free nation. When Jehovah healed the bitter waters of Marah, “He made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there He proved them; and He said, if thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of Jehovah thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His eyes, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases upon thee which I have put upon the Egyptians; for I am Jehovah that healeth thee” (Exod. 15. 25, 26). And in the commonwealth of Israel there must be no slaves; that is, bondsmen must be foreigners, or else those who brought themselves by crime or debt into

servitude for a limited time. Compare what is called the Preface to the Ten Commandments. As there were no slaves, so neither were there any despots. The very soil of Canaan belonged to Jehovah, and was carefully parcelled out for occupation by a stalwart yeomanry. And the unique jubilee law secured both this right to the land and this personal freedom. The tabernacle or trysting tent of Jehovah was in the midst of them, and every adult male in Israel was entitled and bound to appear thrice a year before his God and King. If the Ten Commandments were obeyed, they would produce a God-fearing, intelligent, free, and happy population. The three chapters in Exodus which follow the narrative of the giving of the Law from Mount Sinai, bear the title, "Now these are the judgments which thou shalt set before them"; the word "judgments" may be also quite fairly translated "rights," these being the fundamental rights of every Israelite. No doubt other laws might be and would be added to these as the progress of society might demand; but no new law was to be enacted that was in conflict with these fundamental principles. For thus spoke the invisible King (Lev. 26. 11-13): "I will set My tabernacle among you, and My soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that ye should not be their bondmen; and I have broken the bars of your yoke, and made you go upright."

*Secondly.*—The authority with which this constitution was invested lay in the fact that a covenant had been established between Jehovah and His redeemed people (see Exod. 19—24; Deut. 5, 27—31). The hardy yeomanry of Jehovah had been put in possession of the land. They were called together in every seventh year, "in the year of rest," at the Feast of Tabernacles, or Booths, to hear the Book of the Covenant and the Law which Moses had written. Unless by their own



desperate wilfulness and wickedness, they could not be ignorant of their rights, and they could not have them either filched from them or taken away by violence.

*Thirdly.*—No doubt mankind everywhere lose their rights by their wilfulness and wickedness. But if Israel were not guilty of national suicide, this constitution ought to have lived, since the execution of these laws was in the hands of righteous popular judges within all their gates (Deut. 16. 18–20). This magistracy was an institution on the old lines, seen to be already in existence in the land of Egypt. These judges were authorised to extend the body of law, and to adapt it to the necessities which came to light in the commonwealth from age to age. And there lay an appeal from those local judges “to the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days”; and to disregard the sentence of this Supreme Court, the priest and the judge acting together, was to incur the penalty of death (Deut. 16. 18–20; 17. 8–13).

*Fourthly.*—There was force behind the authority of this law and these decisions, in order to maintain that authority. A striking example of this appears in the account of the altar erected by the Eastern Tribes, and the inquisition made by the Western Tribes (Josh. 22). Compare the severity shown by the assembled tribes towards the men of Jabesh-Gilead, and by Gideon towards the men of Succoth and Penuel, and by Jephthah towards the Ephraimites (Judg. 21. 5–11; 8. 4–7, 13–17; 12. 1–6); also the threat by Saul in the very beginning of his reign (1 Sam. 11. 7). And this force in support of the law is the more deserving of notice, inasmuch as the record speaks repeatedly of carelessness and indifference (Judg. 5. 16, 17, 23; 17. 6; 21. 25).

*Fifthly.*—History throws light on the existence of these fundamental laws of the kingdom, and on the efforts made to alter them. It was Saul’s desire, however modest in its incep-

tion, to establish a standing army. (chap. 13. 2), with which *v.* 1 may have a closer connexion than is believed by those who reject the verse or alter the Massoretic text. How Saul was to meet the expense of such an army may be guessed from chap. 22. 6-8 ; and from the slaughter of the Gibeonites, 2 Sam. 4. 2, 3, compared with 21. 1-9. During the long and glorious reign of David, a reign on the whole on theocratic lines, the military system was developed to a much greater extent. He had shed much blood, and therefore he was not permitted to build the House of Jehovah, as he had wished to do (1 Chron. 22. 8 ; 28. 3). The institution of his order of military merit (2 Sam. 23) shows how far the military spirit had carried him and his people. And it is confirmed by what is related of his sense of weakness when he came into collision with his commander-in-chief (2 Sam. 3. 39, etc.) ; and in the tendency toward giving the highest positions in his militia to men of his own tribe, who were the objects of his special confidence (1 Chron. 27. 1-15 ; comp. 2 Sam. 19. 11-15, 40-43). And his sin in numbering the people has received the most plausible explanation when it has been brought into connexion with the great military organizations which he planned, and the taxation necessary to meet the inevitable expenses (see 1 Chron. 27. 22-24 ; 21. 1-3).

Solomon's administration might not be more military than David's since he is said to have been a man of peace. Yet a comparison of what may be called his cabinet with that of David (1 Kings 4. 1-6 ; 2 Sam. 8. 16-18 ; 20. 23-26), proves how much more prominent and developed, and no doubt also expensive, his civil and military administration had become. 1 Kings 4 is chiefly occupied with a statement of the thorough-going arrangements for the expenses of the king and his household, under twelve officers, each man for a month. One who looks into the list is struck by the title given to them ; not the

usual Hebrew words for "officers," *shoterim* and *pekidim* (the latter also very well translated "overseers"), but quite a different word, sometimes translated "deputies," as in 1 Kings 22. 47. Shall we say that these men were not survivals of the old authorities in the patriarchal system, or in the republican administration as in the age of the Judges, but nominees of the king, his viceroys and representatives, totally disconnected from the people? Observe further that two of them were sons-in-law of Solomon. And while all of them have their fathers named, five of them have no name other than a patronymic, Ben-Hur, Ben-Deker, etc.; a fact which perhaps indicates that the foundations were being laid of a new aristocracy, belonging to the court and not to the country. One other not less important observation is that these twelve deputies were placed, not over the old tribes, unless in three cases, or perhaps four, but over districts which the king in conjunction with his advisers must have formed. It reminds one of a change made in the course of the French Revolution, when the old historical provinces were abolished, for which the new departments were substituted. In both cases it might quite well be that there were certain advantages gained to the kingdom by the change. In the account given in 1 Kings 20 of the attack upon Ahab by Ben-hadad, we read of Ahab deliberating with "all the elders of the land" (*vv.* 7, 8). But the battle in which, under the instruction of a prophet, he defeated Ben-hadad was directed by "the young men of the princes of the provinces" (*vv.* 14, 15, 17, 19), namely, the provinces created by Solomon, for aught that we know: while "the princes of the tribes" (Num. 1. 16, etc.), or "the captains of the tribes" (1 Chron. 27. 16-24), are not so much as mentioned. Is it a similar process of centralisation in Ben-hadad's military arrangements that comes out in *vv.* 1, 12, 16, 24, 25?

After the kingdom of the Twelve Tribes was torn in two,

at the death of Solomon, the constitutional changes are most plainly seen in the kingdom of the Ten Tribes. Those tribes emphatically made for themselves a king, that they might be like all the nations; and in that monarchy the restraining influence of the Law of Moses and the arrangements of Samuel would be least regarded. The kingdom of Judah seemed to secure for itself less liberty, since it continued to submit to the royal house of David. Yet it also must have preserved, within limits, something of the popular privileges of choosing a king—the youngest son (2 Chron. 22. 1), a younger son (2 King's 23. 30, 31, 36). When the usurper Queen Athaliah was put to death, and the kingdom was restored to the rightful heir, the high priest took counsel with the captains of hundreds and the heads of the fathers' houses, and all the congregation were called in to make a covenant with the king in the house of Jehovah (2 Chron. 23. 1-16). And it was thus that an end came to that troublous time in which three successive kings of the house of David had met with a violent and shameful death: "All the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king in the room of his father Amaziah" (2 Chron. 26. 1). Again (chap. 33. 25), "The people of the land slew all them that had conspired against king Amon: and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his stead." Yet undoubtedly there is evidence of the strength of the military spirit under some of the kings of Judah, especially Asa, Jehoshaphat, and Uzziah; this is evinced by the thorough organization of the whole of the male inhabitants of the land into an army, such as might be called a national militia, though perhaps, it also included a certain proportion of the subject nations, incorporated for this purpose with the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

It is not necessary here to go into the particulars of the circumstances which led to the rise of the kingdom of the Ten

Tribes, all at once and in full vigour, as soon as Solomon was dead. This much, at least, is obvious :—

(1) There were the gross sins into which Solomon had fallen, his idolatry and his sensual life, which must have been most offensive to Jehovah, and most demoralising to his subjects. This brought out the fact that both king and people were ripe for judgment. Jehovah said, "This thing is of Me" (1 Kings 12. 24).

(2) There were second causes, such as the costliness and oppressiveness of Solomon's splendid administration, and the interference with the old liberties and rights of his subjects ; "for it was brought about of God, that Jehovah might establish His word which He spake by the hand of Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat" (2 Chron. 10. 15). For King Rehoboam and his young counsellors thought of his being absolute master, and would not listen to any complaint relating to the expenses, both civil and military, burdens to which the people were certainly entitled somehow to object. But Samuel had warned them that their crying out would be in vain. Thus the Ten Tribes became willing to tear themselves loose from the Two Tribes, in their struggle for retrenchment and decentralisation. "To your tents, O Israel; now see to thine own house, David" (1 Kings 12. 16). To strike a blow for home and freedom, and to attain these two objects, they combined in a vastly more numerous militia, under Jeroboam, the daring, skilful, unscrupulous leader, whom they chose to be their king. The next step, to which he artfully led them on, was the spiritual division, by which with fiendish cunning he drew them away from the divinely-appointed worship at Jerusalem ; for so he fitted his policy of jealous isolation into their longings for liberty and fair dealing. This was the essentially wrong step in the process which procured for him the melancholy designation, "Jeroboam who made Israel to sin."

In *civil* matters this decentralisation was effected by ridding themselves of Jerusalem, which had been at once the seat of worship and the seat of government. Indeed Jeroboam set up two capitals, one on each side of the Jordan; perhaps in imitation of Abner, who had set up the throne of Ishbosheth at Mahanaim. On behalf of the Eastern Tribes Jeroboam selected Penuel, and on behalf of the Western Tribes Shechem in the tribe of Ephraim. Each of these cities held an interesting place in the dealings of Jehovah with the patriarchs and with the children of Israel in their earlier history. Moreover, Shechem was the city where the tribes had had their interview with Rehoboam, which precipitated the formation of the new kingdom, and it promised to be a most convenient situation for the capital, being as nearly as possible in the centre of Canaan. Other royal residences are afterwards mentioned; Tirzah, not improbably named after one of those daughters of Zelophehad the Manassite, they who fought and won the battle for the rights of heiresses; Jezreel, in the tribe of Issachar; and above all, Samaria, in the tribe of Ephraim, five or six miles N.W. from Shechem, which became the capital when the process of centralisation had resumed its steady course under the powerful guidance of the dynasty of Omri. The process of decentralisation was no doubt popular at the beginning of the movement which Jeroboam led and controlled. But though it promised to be economical, in contrast to the lavish outlay by Solomon at Jerusalem, it would become very expensive when so many seats of government were chosen and provided with buildings, and when changes were ever being made by successive kings. At the very least there would be one palace in each of these cities; and Ahab's "ivory house . . . . and all the cities which he built" (1 Kings 22. 39) might make his reign architecturally as showy and expensive as Solomon's had been (see also the language in Amos 3. 15; 6. 8-11).

Turning to matters *ecclesiastical*, there would be new temples to build, so as to take the place of Solomon's; one was at Beth-el and one at Dan. This was the first important step in Jeroboam's innovations. He made two calves of gold, and used the unhappy words of Aaron on a similar occasion to allure the people to worship them. "And he *set* the one in Beth-el, and the other *put* he in Dan" (1 Kings 12. 28, 29). The use of two different verbs probably indicates some difference of procedure on the part of this crafty man. Afterwards other "high places" came into competition with these two, and additional sanctuaries were erected. Amos (4. 4) denounces the worship at Beth-el and at Gilgal; and chaps. 5. 5 and 8. 14 name Beer-sheba along with Beth-el and Dan, Gilgal and Samaria. The prophet Hosea speaks of the various places of worship with similar holy vehemence. In fact, at chap. 12. 11, he uses the language of contempt: "Is Gilead iniquity? They are altogether vanity; in Gilead they sacrifice bullocks; yea, their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the field." But naturally the prophets and prophetic historians do not speak of the details of the illicit worship at those high places. Probably there was a tendency to bring the priestly and the royal offices into combination. We may be sure that there were startling deviations from the Mosaic rules. For in Jeroboam's policy it was a fundamental principle to reject the priesthood of the house of Aaron, and to permit any Israelite to propose himself and to be consecrated a priest. If the king could confer the priesthood on anyone at his pleasure, it follows that the king himself was esteemed the head and source of priestly power. If Jeroboam made such an assumption, he might plead that Samuel had already united the civil and the ecclesiastical offices in his own person. Only, if Jeroboam did argue so, he made an unfair use of this precedent. Ahaz, the very superstitious and heathenish king

of Judah, probably made a similar usurpation in connexion with his altar brought from Damascus (2 Kings 16. 12-16).

As regards *military* affairs, it is obvious that the king of the Ten Tribes threw himself more and more into the hands of the army. When the law of God ceases to be the acknowledged rule of life, the law of military force takes a position more and more outstanding and tremendous, as the only bond by which society can be held together. There were very frequent changes of dynasty, and the reigns of most of the kings were short. When Jehu had made himself king, and was putting to death all of Ahab's kindred on whom he could lay his hands, he wrote to the rulers of Jezreel and Samaria, and bade them turn all their military advantages to good account, and said, "Look ye out the best and meetest of your master's sons, and set him on his father's throne, and fight for your master's house" (2 Kings 10. 3). There were very generally wars with the sister kingdom of Judah; and also with the heathen kingdoms around them, yet with the variations seen when Ahab was a vassal of Ben-hadad's and Pekah a vassal of Rezin's, to which humiliation reference is made in Isaiah (chaps. 7 and 17). There were repeated civil wars in which sovereigns were murdered. The two dynasties which lasted longest, those of Omri and of Jehu, apparently were the most vigorous and the most military; and in different ways these two were peculiarly offensive to Jehovah. Ahab was the most daring apostate from the worship of Jehovah, under the influence of Jezebel, his Tyrian wife. Jehu and his able descendant Jeroboam II. were keen against the false worship of the foreign god Baal; but they refused to submit themselves to the pure worship of Jehovah, and generally to His law, and their government was severe and bloody. The first glories of the kingdom of the Ten Tribes may have been restored by the second Jeroboam; but the moral and spiritual strength of the kingdom was



exhausted, and even its physical strength had been wasted in a series of wars, however successful and glorious they might be. The death of the second Jeroboam was the signal for the collapse of all the powers of his kingdom, and introduced with alarming suddenness and severity the judgments which destroyed it and sent the people into a hopeless exile.

Samuel had indeed promised to the people that in any case, and however bad the situation might come to be, he would pray for them; and thus Jehovah would not forsake His people for His great name's sake (1 Sam. 12. 20-25). It has been often noticed that the prophetic office, to the purifying and strengthening of which Samuel devoted much of his energy, appeared with unexampled splendour and success in the kingdom of the Ten Tribes, just as the darkness and misery grew more overwhelming. God has never left Himself without a witness. In some things Elijah appears to have been a prophet and a reformer not inferior to Samuel himself. The line of prophets in the Ten Tribes must have exerted a blessed influence there, in spite of the manifold evils in that degenerate and ungodly kingdom, as Samuel described these to the people in language which he reduced to writing and laid up before Jehovah. Who can doubt that this spoken and written teaching of the great prophet was meant to prepare a way for his successors in the prophetic office, and to keep it open so that they might the better exercise their ministry in the midst of stupendous difficulties? And there are evidences that the work of these prophets did tell with amazing effect upon the people, from the time of the unnamed prophet who resisted the first Jeroboam at the inauguration of his altar, down through Elijah and Elisha in a specially anxious time, and on to Jonah and Amos and Hosea in the age of the second Jeroboam. There is also evidence that the Law of Moses had a hold upon the nation, even where all the basest interests of

the kings might have led them to sweep it away, had they dared. No instance is more to the point than Naboth's refusal, in the name of Jehovah, to give up his vineyard, though he were to get a price for it. On the other hand, it is plain enough that a process of sapping and mining had very greatly broken down the habit of obedience to the Law of Moses, even in the less daringly degenerate kingdom of Judah. The fundamental law which secured the personal liberty of every Israelite, with the exception of not more than six years of bondage in certain well defined cases, and with certain restrictions, had come to be virtually obsolete. An outward profession of penitence in a crisis during which they apprehended the outbreak of divine judgments which would annihilate them, had induced King Zedekiah and his princes and his people to enter into a covenant to restore this right to all God's people. But no sooner had the pressure of immediate danger passed off, than they broke their covenant which they had renewed with an imposing ceremony, and once more set aside the law of God and forced the victims of their oppression back into bondage (see Jer. 34). Then the prophet Jeremiah was commanded to denounce to them the end of the time of forbearance. They were ripe for judgment, and the doom of Samaria came to be shared by Jerusalem. It needed centuries to work out this melancholy result. But at length a limit to the divine long-suffering was reached, though God alone knew beforehand where this boundary line was drawn, when the kingdom had ceased to be the kingdom of Jehovah, and it perished. Thus the word was accomplished which was involved in His message to Samuel: "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not be king over them" (1 Sam. 8. 7).

## INDEX.

	PAGE
AMORITES and other doomed races of Canaanites . . . . .	123-127
—, two policies in Israel in reference to them . . . . .	38 f.
ANGEL OF JEHOVAH along with the Spirit of Jehovah in the Book of Judges . . . . .	36 f.
ANOINTING of the priests and kings . . . . .	166 f., 178 f.
ARK of God, variations in the name of the . . . . .	91 f.
— degraded by the Israelites in the time of Eli; its exile in consequence . . . . .	92-94
— later notices of it . . . . .	138-140
— its resting places after the fall of Shiloh . . . . .	222, 227-230
<i>See also BETH-SHEMESH.</i>	
BEER-SHEBA . . . . .	134, 143
BETH-EL . . . . .	130
<i>See GILGAL and MIZPAH.</i>	
BETH-SHEMESH and the ark . . . . .	95, 134
BOCHIM . . . . .	37-39
CHRONICLES, attacks on their reliability as historical records	140 n., 218 n.
CRITICISM which denies the trustworthiness of the historical materials . . . . .	6-18
— some of its obvious defects . . . . .	18-23
DAVID and the ark . . . . .	138-140
— his relations with Samuel . . . . .	2 f., 209-211, 213-218
ELI . . . . .	26, 43, 55 f., 65-67, 69, 71-74, 93
ELIJAH and ELISHA . . . . .	4 f.
EZRA and NEHEMIAH . . . . .	5 f.
FEASTS of the Mosaic Law . . . . .	52 f., 101, 140 f.
<i>See also MIZPAH and TRYSTS.</i>	
GIBRON . . . . .	139, 140 n.
GIBONITES, their relation to the House of God . . . . .	105 f., 218, 229
<i>See also KIRJATH-JEARIM.</i>	
GILGAL . . . . .	130

	PAGE
HANNAH. <i>See</i> TABLE OF CONTENTS.	
—, Song of . . . . .	62-65
<i>Also</i> APPENDIX, Note A . . . . .	251-258
HEBREWS, as distinguished from Israelites . . . . .	198 n.
JASHER (or JASHAR), Book of . . . . .	231
<i>Also</i> APPENDIX, Note C . . . . .	260 f.
JEHOVAH, Angel of. <i>See</i> ANGEL.	
—, habitation of . . . . .	32 f.
—, appearing in Shiloh . . . . .	37, 76
<i>Also</i> APPENDIX, Note B . . . . .	258-260
“ — OF HOSTS,” use of this title . . . . .	30 f.
— SPIRIT OF, working mightily on Samson, Saul, and David . . . . .	169 f.
JUDGES at the head of the commonwealth of Israel till Saul . . . . .	25-27
— BOOK OF, its account of religious movements . . . . .	24 f.
—, —, a record of mixed good and evil . . . . .	25, 36 f., 38-40
KINGDOM IN ISRAEL, the law in Deuteronomy and the historical realisation . . . . .	145-148, 155-159
—, —, difference between the true constitution and the king- dom which the people wished . . . . .	148-154
<i>Also</i> APPENDIX, Note D . . . . .	261-273
KINGDOM expressed by different Hebrew words . . . . .	84, 176 n., 195 and n.
KIRJATH-JEARIM and the ark . . . . .	105-107
LEADER (or Prince), common name for the king, especially at first . . . . .	160
LITERARY RELATION of 1 Samuel to the earlier Books of Scrip- ture . . . . .	231-243
MAN OF GOD . . . . .	161 f.
MIZPAH and MIZPEH . . . . .	192 n.
—, its place in Israel's religious history . . . . .	129 f.
—, with Beth-el and Gilgal, Samuel's three places for adminis- tering justice . . . . .	129-134
MONARCHY successfully introduced by Samuel . . . . .	181 f.
<i>See</i> KINGDOM.	
MOSES as it were repeated in Samuel . . . . .	4, 79 f., 112-115, 119 f., 121 f., 124 f., 128, 137, 194
MOSES and JOSHUA . . . . .	2
PHILISTINES . . . . .	91-99, 111 f., 122, 141
PRIESTHOOD in the time of the Judges . . . . .	28
—, with little spiritual power in Samuel's time 117-119, 136-138, 218-220	
—, change in the line of the high-priesthood . . . . .	29 f., 66 f., 222-224, 226 f.

	PAGE
PRIESTHOOD, dual high-priesthood . . . . .	139 f., 217, 222-224, 248
—, doubts whether the high-priesthood existed in the earlier ordinances for the sanctuary . . . . .	223 n.
PROGRESS in the Old Testament history of redemption . . . . .	1
—, instruments of this were often raised up in pairs . . . . .	2-6
PROPHETS, not merely foretelling . . . . .	81
—, interpreting and applying the Law of Moses . . . . .	81-83
—, specially dealing with the kingdom of God . . . . .	83-85
—, their connexion with sacred music . . . . .	88-90
— in the time of the Book of Judges . . . . .	27 f.
— —, afterwards till Samuel . . . . .	62, 64-68
—, alleged opposition between them and the priests . . . . .	3 f.
—, FORMER . . . . .	82-84
—, companies or bands of . . . . .	80 f., 88, 135, 211 f.
RAMAH . . . . .	49, 127, 138, 142, 144, 168 n., 207
SAMUEL. <i>See</i> TABLE OF CONTENTS.	
—, meaning of the name . . . . .	43-46
SAUL, his first meeting with Samuel . . . . .	162-166, 167-170, 172-176
—, his disobedience in not going to Gilgal . . . . .	173 f., 177, 182
—, his subsequent relations to Samuel . . . . .	176-205
"SAUL TOOK THE KINGDOM" . . . . .	184, 195 f.
SEERS . . . . .	86 f.
SHILOH, the tabernacle set up there by Joshua . . . . .	28, 32
—, suppositions that its tabernacle was different from that of Moses . . . . .	70 n.
—, tendency to make the settlement there permanent . . . . .	31 f.
—, was it afterwards avoided by Samuel? . . . . .	133 f.
—, unity of Israel's worship there. <i>See</i> UNITY.	
SPIRIT OF THE LORD. <i>See</i> JEHOVAH.	
TABERNACLE. <i>See</i> SHILOH.	
TERAPHIM . . . . .	205 and n.
TRYSTS OF JEHOVAH . . . . .	28, 31 n., 193
UNITY OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP from Dan to Beer-sheba, at Shiloh . . . . .	34-36
— —, how kept by Samuel . . . . .	75 f., 107-109
WOMAN, her place and influence in the religion of Israel . . . . .	46 f., 51 f., 53 f., 56 f.